
Response to Question on Notice

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

July 2012

On 5 June 2012, during a hearing in relation to an inquiry by the Senate Committee (the committee) relating to the enquiry, *factors affecting the supply of health services and medical professionals in rural areas*, Senator McKenzie asked the following question:

Senator McKENZIE: What percentage of the young graduates who receive an incentive to go rural do not make it to the end of that contract, if you like?

Dr Cole: I would have to take that on notice and come back to you on that one.

Senator McKENZIE: Could you? That would be fine, and to put a dollar amount next to that would be great.

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) Rural Incentive Program has been in operation since 2008. Across that time at least 33 clinicians have been awarded incentives to work in rural areas of Victoria.

The program was designed to encourage dental clinicians to work in rural areas of Victoria. The incentive provides for support for dental clinicians (including Oral Health Therapists, Dentists and Dental Prosthetists) to permanently relocate from Metropolitan to non-metropolitan locations. The program funding assists with relocation expenses and associated costs.

Out of the thirty three clinicians who took part in the rural incentive scheme:

- 42% are still employed in their regional clinic;
- 57% are not working in the original placement and many have moved back to Melbourne;

Across the three years that the program was in place only six clinicians have stayed greater than two years at their regional placement, though they usually have not remained employed at full time tenure in the public clinics, often splitting their time between private and public practice.

The amount that was claimed by clinicians varied between \$1,100 up to \$4600 dependant on where the clinician worked and how far they relocated.

The average duration of employment in regional areas for clinicians who received the relocation incentive was 16.3 months prior to departure.

Across three years DHSV has made an investment totalling \$84,976 for assisting with the relocation of dental clinicians.

Other Programs

Last year a new rural incentive program was announced by the State Government involving DHSV offering a one-off incentive of \$6000 for the Dental Practitioners Graduate Program to take up the opportunity of a rural placement. In addition up to \$10,000 is paid towards accommodation and travel plus an 'end of program' bonus of \$10,000.

It is anticipated that graduate students will take up the opportunity to undertake their first graduate year in regional locations and stay on for some years afterwards.