

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-299

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: RURAL LOCUM SCHEME FOR NURSES

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Pursuant to the National Health and Hospitals Network – Workforce - Rural Locum scheme for nurses, the government promised to provide 750 locum nurses per year with living costs assistance while they undertook continuing professional development and also an allowance to improve the attractiveness of locum posts. \$28.8 million over 4 years 2010-11 Budget Paper #2, page 243. Please advise:

- a) How many Rural Locum nurses have used the scheme to pursue professional development?
- b) How was the locum allowance calculated and administered?
- c) What proportion of the funding in 2010-2011 was spent on living cost assistance to locum nurses pursuing professional development and what proportion was spent on providing a locum allowance?
- d) Have stakeholders raised any concerns with you concerning the operation of the scheme?

Answer:

- a) Aspen Medical Pty Ltd (Aspen) was appointed on 21 April 2011 as the administrator of both the Rural Nurse Locum Scheme and the Rural Allied Health Locum Scheme, known collectively as the Nursing and Allied Health Rural Locum Scheme (NAHRLS). NAHRLS is currently being advertised and the first locum placements are anticipated to commence between July and September 2011.
- b) NAHRLS provides up to \$420 per day as an incentive allowance to contribute to the costs associated with undertaking the placement, including accommodation. Aspen will administer the allowance.

The average cost of accommodation was estimated as \$120 per day and was based upon Aspen's extensive experience with placing locums in rural and remote areas under the Remote Area Health Corp.

The remaining \$300 will be given directly to the locum by Aspen as meal allowance and work incentive payment.

- c) Nurses pursuing professional development activities are not eligible for living costs assistance under this Scheme. The daily allowance is specifically for the locums whilst on placement.
- d) The Department is not aware of any stakeholder concerns regarding the scheme.