

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-442

OUTCOME 4: Aged Care and Population Ageing

Topic: PRIMARY CARE - DEMENTIA

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

There is evidence that GPs do not identify dementia early, do not complete a full assessment as described in the guidelines and fail to provide the full range of recommended management options to their patients. What action has been taken by the Government to address timely diagnosis of dementia in the context of the Government's primary health care reforms?

Answer:

General practice has an integral role in the care of people with dementia in the community. GPs and general practice nurses are frequently the first point of call for people experiencing early signs of dementia and have the opportunity to refer people and their families and carers to support services such as the National Dementia Helpline (1800 100 500) and the Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Services (1800 699 799) and respite services or packaged care.

The Australian Government provides funding of approximately \$3 million each year for the management of five Dementia Training Study Centres (Training Centre). The aim of the Training Centres is to improve the quality of care and support provided to people living with dementia and their families through the development and upskilling of the dementia care workforce and the transfer of knowledge into practice.

As part of this program, each Training Centre has recently been allocated National Priority Areas (NPAs). The Victorian/Tasmanian Training Centre and the South Australian/ Northern Territory Training Centre have been tasked with the NPAs of General Practitioners and diagnosing dementia respectively. A number of activities are being implemented as part of this arrangement including a General Practitioner Education and Training Needs Analysis, National Diagnosing Dementia Project, GP Master Classes and Palliative Care GP Seminars.

One of the key components of the Government's national health reform agenda is the establishment of Medicare Locals. Medicare Locals will be primary health care organisations established around the nation to coordinate primary health care delivery and tackle local health care needs and service gaps. They will drive improvements in primary health care and ensure that services are better tailored to meet the needs of local communities.

The Minister's Dementia Advisory Group has identified the role of primary care in providing quality care for people with dementia and support for their families as one of its key priority areas in the next twelve months.