

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

**Question:** E12-000009

**OUTCOME 12:** Health Workforce Capacity

**Topic:** Voluntary Dental Gap Year Program

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Number of pages:** 2

**Senator:** Senator Bushby

**Question:**

In relation to the newly implemented Voluntary Dental Gap Year Program, can the Department state whether they have done any forecasting on how this will affect:

- a) Public waiting lists
- b) Dentists/Graduates relocating into rural areas.
- c) Can the Department provide a reason as to why it chose to extend the deadline of the tender process, after the deadline had arrived?
- d) Given the short time-lines for the Voluntary Dental Gap Year to be implemented, can the Department state with absolute confidence that this factor will not influence the functionality and quality of this program?

**Answer:**

- a) The Department cannot accurately forecast how the Voluntary Dental Graduate Year Program (VDGYP) will affect public waiting lists. The amount of clinical time participating graduates will spend treating patients on public waiting lists will be dependent on the curriculum requirements (once finalised), the particular host service provider and their client needs. This may vary from placement to placement.

However, as the VDGYP is focused on the public sector and areas of need, it will provide an additional 50 graduate dentists to these areas each year (and more on the expansion of the measure), and will subsequently increase service delivery capacity in the public sector.

An evaluation of the VDGYP will be undertaken to determine the impact of the VDGYP. The Department is in the process of selecting an organisation to develop an evaluation framework to inform data and information collection that will assist in determining the success of the program.

- b) The number of graduate dentists relocating to rural areas under the VDGYP is not known. This may vary from year to year depending on the applications received and the number of potential host service providers in rural areas, which is yet to be finalised. The evaluation framework will also include data collection on rural placements and inform the evaluation of the measure.
- c) The Department extended the closing date of the ITA for the Administration of the VDGYP from 2:00pm 12 April 2012 to 2:00pm 19 April 2012.

After consideration of whether to accept late applications and in recognition that the ITA was open over the Easter holiday period, which could have been an impediment to fully developing and finalising applications, the Department decided to allow all organisations to have access to a short extension.

Providing an extension to one or a small number of applicants could have been perceived as unfair and providing an advantage to certain applicants. This extension also enabled organisations who had submitted applications by the original closing date to submit a revised proposal by the extended closing date if they wished to do so.

The decision to extend the closing time, and the delegate approval to the extension, occurred prior to the original 2pm 12 April 2012 closing time. Following the formal approval being granted, some unanticipated delays occurred in uploading the addendum to the Department's website, which occurred at 2:02pm 13 April 2012. All individuals and organisations that had registered for the ITA were notified as soon as the addendum was confirmed.

- d) The ITA was only extended by one week and did not significantly influence the implementation timelines. The VDGYP is currently on track to deliver graduate placements from early 2013.