

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: E12-019

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Specialist Palliative Care Nurses

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

- a) If more nurses were trained in the palliative care specialty, do you believe this would result in fewer hospital presentations?
- b) If so, doesn't it make more sense to train more nurses, making them more accessible to terminally ill patients and therefore avoiding the need for terminally ill patients having to wait in emergency?
- c) Is palliative care nursing training included in the curriculum for undergraduate nurses? Do you believe it should be?

Answer:

- a) There is no recognised nursing specialty in palliative care within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). All registered nurses are trained to provide nursing care across the life-span. This includes end of life care. Many nurses working in the area of palliative care do have post graduate qualifications in palliative care nursing. The department is unable to comment on the impact of nurses with particular qualifications on hospital presentations as the provision of hospital services is the responsibility of state and territory governments.
- b) The Government is supporting training for more nurses. Over 3 years the number of student registered nurses increased by 24% (34,871 in 2007 to 43,092 in 2010). As part of the Government's \$425M commitment to further expand clinical training capacity, 32% of this funding will go to nursing. An additional 1,000 new undergraduate training places for registered nurses per year are available as well as support for nurses to work in places of high need such as rural health, aged care, primary care and emergency departments.
- c) The curriculum of all accredited undergraduate courses for registered nurses includes palliative care for individuals and support for families with a focus on maximising function and quality of life.

There is a range of study opportunities available for registered nurses working in palliative care. These range from post-graduate courses through to continuing professional development activities provided by universities and professional organisations.