

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: E12-095

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Rural Health Workforce

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator McKenzie

Question:

Rural Health Workforce Australia has called for changes to the way the department uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification - Remoteness Areas in relation to encouraging health professionals to work in areas with the greatest need.

The RWHA CEO Greg Sam says that the focus should switch from location to need 'We would prefer to see a more sophisticated approach that takes account of actual health needs and incentives doctors to work in these communities'.

- a) What is your reaction to this suggested new approach?
- b) Would the department consider RHWA's suggestion?

Answer:

a) and b)

The Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Area (ASGC-RA) system has been used for the purpose of distributing health workforce incentives for just two years. In this time, more than 11,000 doctors have received incentives to practice in regional, rural and remote locations and the number of GPs practising in these areas has increased by more than 4 per cent.

As part of the 2012-13 review of health workforce programs, rural workforce programs will be assessed, including the remoteness classification system. The review will consider the views of all interested stakeholders about evidence-based approaches to ensuring taxpayer support is directed to providing better health services to Australian communities.