

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: E12-262

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Rural Health Workforce

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Di Natale

Question:

- a) What evidence does the Department have about the relative demand, compared with the availability of places, for scholarships relating to nursing and allied health?
- b) Given the greater number of (in particular) nursing students currently in training, what consideration is being given to how the distribution of nurses will be improved and how a greater proportion of them can be obtained for the health sector?

Answer:

- a) The Government provides funding for scholarship relating to nursing and allied health through the Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship Support Scheme (NAHSSS). The administrators of the NAHSSS scholarships provide the department with information on how many eligible applications were received and how many scholarships were awarded for each type of scholarship. The demand for scholarships varies between each type of nursing and allied health scholarship.

Around 7,000 eligible applications for nursing and midwifery scholarships and 2,000 eligible applications for allied health scholarships are received annually. In 2011, a total of 1,141 nursing and midwifery scholarships and 619 allied health scholarships were awarded.

- b) During 2012-13 the Department will be undertaking a review of activities funded by the Health Workforce Division (HWD). The review is expected to focus on analysing the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of programs in terms of meeting key health workforce objectives and priorities, such as ensuring the appropriate distribution of the workforce.

The Department is also working closely with Health Workforce Australia (HWA) to develop policy responses to the findings of Health Workforce 2025. The nursing workforce in Australia is more evenly distributed than other health professions.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report into the nursing workforce, released on 28 June 2012, notes the following regarding the nursing workforce:

- In 2011, there were 326,669 registered and enrolled nurses and direct entry midwives registered through the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). This was an increase of 6.8% since 2007 (305,834).
- Of these, 303,010 (92.8%) were in the nursing labour force:
 - 247,502 (81.7%) were registered nurses; and
 - 55,508 (18.3%) were enrolled nurses.

Distribution

The supply of nurses across Remoteness areas in 2007 and 2011 is shown in the table below, with the highest increase in supply in Very Remote areas. However, there was a decrease in both *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas over the period 2007 to 2011.

(Source: AIHW)

	2007	2011	
Major cities	1,027 FTE	1,102 FTE	↑ 7.2%
Inner regional	1,108 FTE	1,033 FTE	↓ 6.8%
Outer regional	1,036 FTE	995 FTE	↓ 4.0%
Remote	1,120 FTE	1,143 FTE	↑ 2.1%
Very Remote	1,056 FTE	1,336 FTE	↑ 26.5%