

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: E12-359

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Health Professional Programs

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Senator: Senator Wright

Question:

In the distribution of mental health professionals between rural and urban areas:

- a) how many psychiatrists are based in rural or remote areas compared to those based in urban areas - provide the numerical figures and the percentages for psychiatrists; and
- b) provide the same information for psychologists, mental health nurses and social workers working as allied health professionals in the mental health field.

Answer:

a) Psychiatrists

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) *Mental Health Services in Australia* reports data on those mental health professionals employed in mental health services.

In 2009, 3,005 psychiatrists were employed in mental health services. A further 725 were employed as psychiatrists in training. The distribution of psychiatrists and psychiatrists in training by Remoteness Areas is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Psychiatrists and psychiatrists in training by Remoteness Area, 2009

	Remoteness Area of main job ^(a)					
	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote / Very remote ^(b)	Not stated	Australia
Psychiatry	3,202	299	84	14	131	3,730
Proportion (%)	85.8	8.0	2.3	0.4	3.5	100.0

(a) Remoteness area is derived from the postcode of the respondent's location of main job. These data should be treated with caution due to the large number of *Not reported* values for remoteness area, relative to the number of values reported in *Outer regional* and *Remote and very remote* areas.

(b) The number for each variable may not sum to the total due to the estimation process and rounding.

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Survey, 2009 and unpublished ABS data

- b) The most recent, reliable and currently available data on the number and distribution by

Remoteness Area for psychologists and social workers is that published in the Health and Community labour force report which sources data from the ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006.

In 2006, there were 12,061 psychologists and 12,441 social workers employed in Australia. The distribution of these professions by Remoteness Area is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Psychologists and Social workers employed in Australia^(a) by Remoteness Area, 2006

ANZSCO Occupation	Remoteness Area of main job					Total ^(a)
	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote	
Psychology ^(b)	9,490	1,810	648	79	23	12,061
<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>78.7</i>	<i>15.0</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>99.9</i>
Social Worker	9,287	2,135	839	121	38	12,441
<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>74.6</i>	<i>17.2</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>99.8</i>

(a) Includes 'Other Territories', 'Off shore migratory' and 'No usual Address'.

(b) Includes Clinical Psychologist, Educational Psychologist, Organisational Psychologist, Psychologists, nec, and Psychologists, nfd.

Note: Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data and therefore rows may not total exactly..

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2006 (data available from ABS on request).

More recent data will become available in the near future with the release of the 2011 Census data and release of the National Registration and Accreditation voluntary labour force survey data for psychologists.

The most recent and authoritative data on the number of mental health nurses employed in Australia is reported by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in *Mental Health Services in Australia*. The data is sourced from the Nursing and Midwifery labour force survey 2009.

In 2009, there were 15,557 mental health nurses employed in Australia. The distribution of the workforce by Remoteness Area is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Employed mental health nurses by Remoteness Area, 2009

	Remoteness Area of main job ^(a)					
	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote / Very remote	Not stated	Australia
Mental health nurses	10,182	3,381	837	196	961	15,557
<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>65.4</i>	<i>21.7</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>100.0</i>

(a) Remoteness area is derived from the postcode of the respondent's location of main job. These data should be treated with caution due to the large number of Not reported values for remoteness area, relative to the number of values reported in Outer regional and Remote and Very remote areas.

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009.