

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written Question received 4 September 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000616

Questions Subject: Reporting on number of deaths in aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

In relation to the Victorian Chief Health Officer's comments on 31 August that "the Commonwealth has strengthened the reporting obligations in early August based on a need to have absolutely definitive data on deaths that have occurred in residence have coronavirus":

- a. Does the change in reporting obligations mean any of the figures provided to the Committee are inaccurate
- b. Has the Department made any changes to figures previously published under its COVID-19 infographic collection as a result of the change in reporting obligations
- c. If yes to (a) or (b), please provide updated figures to the Committee on COVID-19 total deaths and aged care deaths, broken down by state and territory

Answer:

- a) No. The Commonwealth Government has not changed its obligations on aged care providers for the reporting of COVID-19 cases. Figures on COVID-19 cases provided to the Committee were accurate.

States and territories have responsibility for the reporting of COVID-19 cases. They are also responsible for registering and reporting deaths with their jurisdiction.

On 8 August 2020, the Secretary of the Department of Health wrote to all residential aged care providers to reiterate the importance of immediately reporting COVID-19 related deaths in to the Victorian Public Health Unit and the Australian Government Department of Health.

The Commonwealth has worked closely with Victoria to reconcile discrepancies between Commonwealth data (collected by Commonwealth case managers) and Victorian Government data on COVID-19 cases. As a result of this process, adjustments to the Victorian data have been made:

- On 31 August 2020, the Victorian Government announced an increase of 37 deaths in aged care. This included 27 deaths in aged care that occurred prior to 29 August 2020.
- On 4 September 2020, the Victorian Government announced an increase of 58 deaths in aged care. This included 50 deaths in aged care that occurred in July and August 2020.

b) No

c) N/A