

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 Hearing

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

14 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000486

Question Subject: Did the CDNA refer to the Royal Commission interim report

Type of Question: Spoken

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Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: Can I put this to you, Professor Murphy or Professor Kelly. I think the response centre is good; I think it probably should have been in place a bit earlier, in hindsight. I read the review of Dorothy Henderson Lodge that has been published by the royal commission; it is still not available from the government. The issues that it found back in March were staffing; infection prevention and control; use of PPE; accommodating different groups of residents; hospital transfers; medical support; and communication. All of these issues have been replicated in the Victorian outbreak. I don't think the review of Dorothy Henderson Lodge was available to the public until the royal commission had published it. It doesn't seem to me that the issues in Victoria should be new to the Department of Health, because they were the findings of the Dorothy Henderson Lodge review. My guess is that the Newmarch House report will find similar things when it comes out. In terms of the CDNA plan, did that committee—and it's quite a large committee—have access to the interim report of the royal commission before they formulated the CDNA guidelines?

Prof. Kelly: The CDNA guidelines preceded any of these outbreaks.

CHAIR: I know; sorry, I have moved to the royal commission interim report released at the back end of last year, titled Neglect—that that was the name of the report speaks volumes for the aged-care sector in Australia. It raised a whole range of issues around how the sector operates: governance; leadership; poor clinical standards; continence management; poor food and nutrition; use of physical restraints; overprescribing; and patchy palliative care. These were all issues in the royal commission's interim report. Did the CDNA inform themselves of that report when formulating the guidelines?

Prof. Kelly: I'll have to take that on notice. I wasn't part of the deliberations of this particular committee at that time.

Answer:

The Australian Government has been continuously building on our response to COVID-19 in residential aged care since January 2020, with the aged care sector and with state and territory governments and health authorities, incorporating learnings from aged care reviews and reports, and the experiences of COVID-19 outbreaks in Australia and other countries.

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) developed the National Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities (the Guidelines). The Guidelines were initially published in March 2020 (Version 1) and aimed to provide the information and systems required to prevent and best manage an outbreak. There is no record to indicate whether the CDNA specifically considered the Royal Commission interim report during development of the Guidelines. However, the Guidelines were developed taking a range of matters and expertise into account. Commonwealth members were aware of the Royal Commission interim report. The Guidelines have been updated twice since initial publication, informed by the findings and learnings from subsequent outbreaks.