

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000438

Earle Haven Inquiry for Recommendation 21

Written

Senator: Stirling Griff

Question:

1. Noting Recommendation 21 of the November 2019 Inquiry into the Events at Earle Haven ('Earle Haven Inquiry'):

a. Has the Department of Health developed a response plan for emerging situations where there is a risk of an imminent collapse in the provision of aged care services, and if not, why not?

b. What training is being provided to management of residential aged care facilities in all States and territories to better enable them to respond to emergency situations?

Answer:

1a: The Department has a mechanism to deal with emerging situations where there is a risk of an imminent collapse in provision of aged care services. To support individual providers in financial distress, including as a result of the recent bushfires or the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department has commissioned accounting and business advisory services to help approved providers review their operations and to provide advice on business management and financial strategies.

In addition, National Cabinet endorsed a plan on 21 August 2020, to boost aged care preparedness for a rapid emergency response to COVID-19, and a guide to the establishment of an aged care health emergency response operations centre. To support continued Commonwealth, state and territory collaboration, a permanent AHPPC Aged Care Advisory Group has also been established.

A Bulk Information Distribution Service message was sent on 9 November 2020, advising providers to prepare to respond to emergency events ahead of the high risk season for adverse weather events, including bushfires.

1b: In accordance with the Aged Care Quality Standards, approved providers are required to recruit, train, equip and support staff to ensure the welfare of residents at all times. As indicated in the response to 1a, the Department supports management of residential aged care facilities through providing accounting and business advisory services for approved providers.

Approved providers are also required to comply with their responsibilities under the *Aged Care Act 1997*. This includes meeting the Aged Care Quality Standards by having appropriate risk management and governance systems in place.