

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 7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000455

Question Subject: Infectious Disease specialists in Victorian facilities

Question type: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Do all facilities experiencing outbreaks in Victoria have an infectious disease specialist assisting (point to Dorothy Henderson Lodge where infectious disease specialist was one of the reasons they were able to manage covid successfully)? Why or why not and what is the Commonwealth doing to support this?

Answer:

Commonwealth law requires approved providers of aged care homes meet the Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards) to ensure quality care and services are provided to all care recipients. Under the Quality Standards, providers are required to demonstrate the workforce is recruited, trained, equipped and supported to deliver the outcomes required by the Quality Standards. Through this requirement, it is expected that members of the workforce receive the ongoing support, training, professional development, supervision and feedback they need to carry out their role and responsibilities, including on infection prevention and control.

A range of infection control expertise is available to, or employed by, aged care providers experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak.

The Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC) is doing infection prevention and control work with the Australian Defence Force to help Victorian aged care services to manage an outbreak, in addition to visits by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Some providers employ in-house expertise, or contract the expertise in, and therefore may not require or seek additional support from the Commonwealth.

Aged care providers with COVID-19 outbreaks are also being supported by:

- The state government Public Health Unit outbreak squads.
- Where they are co-located on hospital campuses, the adjacent hospital.
- Aspen Medical, through the Department of Health contracting arrangements.
- Healthcare Australia, through the workforce surge arrangements.
- AUSMAT teams, who have been deployed to aged care services to set up and implement appropriate infection control arrangements.

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Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written question received 7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000458

Percentage of the aged care workforce across multiple sites

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Do you know what percentage of the aged care workforce work across multiple sites?

Answer:

The Department does not currently collect data on the number of people working across multiple sites.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written Questions received 7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000459

Government Funding for providers

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

On 19 July the Government announced Funding for providers to help staff work at a single facility including by ensuring aged care employers can cover additional entitlements:

- a. How much funding is attached to this scheme, broken down by state and territory and facility type (government, for profit, not for profit), home care and residential care?
- b. How has the scheme been functioning?
- c. How many aged care workers that are still working across multiple sites across the country?
- d. Have providers started receiving that money and what guarantees are in place to ensure it is being passed on to employees?
- e. Do providers need to apply for the funding and what is the process?
- f. Will this funding apply to all staff including direct and non direct workers?

Answer:

- a. **How much funding is attached to this scheme, broken down by state and territory and facility type (government, for profit, not for profit), home care and residential care?**
 - On 31 August 2020, the Australian Government announced \$92.4 million will be provided through the Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 (SACWIC) grant opportunity, which is currently available for eligible employers in Greater Melbourne and Mitchell Shire. This is a demand driven program and is not broken down by facility type.
- b. **How has the scheme been functioning?**
 - On 4 August 2020, the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the 'GO4215 – SACWIC grant opportunity were published on the GrantConnect website: www.grants.gov.au.

c. How many aged care workers that are still working across multiple sites across the country?

- Aged care providers are responsible for managing their workforce including complying with any jurisdiction public health orders or, as is the case in Victoria, to implement the approach set out in guidance developed by industry and unions about workers working at a single site.
- Information from SACWIC and the retention bonus will provide certain insights into this.
- The 2018 report *A Matter of Care – Australia’s Aged Care Workforce Strategy* recommended a centralised register of all aged care workers covering police checks, training and accreditation. A public consultation on options for this register was completed in June 2020 and the final report of the consultation was received on 25 August 2020. Details of the information to be collected in the register are still under consideration, but the primary purpose is to ensure that the worker is suitable to be registered.

d. Have providers started receiving that money and what guarantees are in place to ensure it is being passed on to employees?

- Providers are expected to pay employees their regular income over the 12 weeks that the single site principle is in place. Providers can then apply for the SACWIC grant to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.
- Applications had been submitted by providers, and these providers are being given the opportunity to update their application to take account of the announcement to extend the grant opportunity for an additional four weeks. Providers will receive grant funding once applications have been updated.
- The Department will undertake audits during the grant process to ensure funds are appropriately distributed to eligible employees. Through this audit process, providers would be expected to provide:
 - employment records and supporting evidence concerning the employment and work hours for Eligible Aged Care Workers; and
 - evidence of the payment of wages and entitlements for workers.
- An underlying principle of the grant is that employees are not to be disadvantaged as a result of working at a single site.

e. Do providers need to apply for the funding and what is the process?

- Eligible approved Residential Aged Care providers, approved National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program providers and approved Home Care providers may apply for the SACWIC Grant.
- To apply, providers must complete the online grant opportunity application form available on GrantConnect under the ‘GO4215 – Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19’ grant opportunity.
- Providers can submit applications between 15 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.

f. Will this funding apply to all staff including direct and non-direct workers?

- Yes.