

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-126

OUTCOME 4: Aged Care and Population Ageing

Topic: REPORTABLE ASSAULTS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

The Department is reporting that it receives a large number of reportable assaults every year (1,815 in 2010-11), but the reporting does not allow a third party to interpret this data in order to gauge how serious sexual and physical assaults in aged care homes really are. The objective of my questions is for better reporting and public disclosure of the true extent of the problem posed by physical and sexual abuse. Please advise why there is no reporting on the outcome of the police investigations of the reportable assault cases.

Answer:

The objective of compulsory reporting of alleged or suspected cases of unreasonable use of force or unlawful sexual contact is to:

- ensure that all allegations are reported to police so they can enact an appropriate investigation to determine whether the allegation is substantiated, and
- ensure that the Department of Health and Ageing can monitor action taken by approved providers to support the alleged victim and to protect all residents.

The compulsory reporting of alleged or suspected cases of unreasonable use of force and unlawful sexual contact assists the Department to monitor the safety of aged care residents, and to help ensure aged care homes provide a safe and secure environment for residents. The police are responsible for determining what actually occurred and whether legal action should proceed.