

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-150

OUTCOME 6: RURAL HEALTH

Topic: After Hours Care in Rural Areas

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

Please provide details of the following:

Has the Government undertaken a cost benefit analysis between the after hours telephone GP Helpline – HealthDirect and traditional models for provision of after hours care in small rural towns, where this care is often provided through local hospitals by local doctors on call with triage by local hospital nurses?

Answer:

Between 6pm on 1 July 2011 and midnight on 12 February 2012, 99,508 callers were transferred to the *after hours GP helpline* of which 20,169 calls were from rural areas.

Of these calls from rural areas:

- 9,322 had a GP outcome of “self care advice + see GP in hours*”;
- 968 calls had a GP outcome of “self care advice + see a health care provider”;
- 1,703 calls had a GP outcome of “self care advice only”;
- 293 calls were transferred to 000
- 2,991 calls were to go to the Emergency Department immediately;
- 1,206 calls were to see a GP immediately
- 2,671 calls were to see a GP immediately no GP available;
- 54 calls were for mental health referral;
- 335 calls were not applicable; and
- 626 calls no GP outcome was recorded

Data is not available on caller compliance with the helpline GP recommendation.

*Treatment could wait until the following day that is not the weekend or a public holiday.