

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-155

OUTCOME 6: Rural Health

Topic: AFTER HOURS CARE IN RURAL AREAS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

Why is the Government handing over responsibility for providing financial support for after-hours medical care to Medicare Locals when the same policy shift in England resulted in around 90 per cent of GPs walking away from providing afterhours services?

Answer:

The United Kingdom (UK) primary health system varies considerably from the primary health care system in Australia. The aims and objectives of the primary health care reforms in Australia also differ from those that were implemented in the UK. Therefore, the outcomes of Australia's after hours primary health care reforms are expected to differ and cannot be directly compared with those in the UK.

The aim of the Australian Government's reforms to after hours primary health care is to provide all Australians with accessible and effective after hours primary care services.

To achieve this Medicare Locals will work closely with local GPs, health professionals and the community to identify and address gaps in access to local after hours primary health care services. Medicare Locals are expected to fund existing after hours services that work well in meeting the needs of the community. In areas where after hours services are limited or non-existent, Medicare Locals will work with health professionals to identify current issues and design local solutions that address gaps and improve access to suitable after hours primary health care services.