ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12- 163

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: OVERSEAS TRAINED DOCTORS AND RURAL WORKFORCE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

a)   Can DoHA confirm that overseas trained doctor/international medical graduate subject to the 10 year rule are able to work in discrete city locations for up to 6 months in locum positions?

b)   If so, is it possible that OTDs can effectively work as locums in a different city locations every 6 months?

c)   Does this not severely undermine the purpose of S19AB of the Act?

Answer:

a)   The Department of Health and Ageing may consider granting an exemption under section 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) to overseas trained doctors (OTDs) and foreign graduates of an accredited medical school (FGAMS) who are seeking to provide locum services at a medical practice. Such requests may be considered in cases where the OTD or FGAMS is seeking to provide locum services at a medical practice within a city location.

The Department may grant a section 19AB exemption for the purpose of allowing an OTD or FGAMS to provide locum services in cases where there is an established need for a locum doctor at the medical practice. Exemptions may be granted in cases where a replacement is required for a medical practitioner who is taking a leave of absence or there is another identified short term need.

b)   An OTD or FGAMS may apply to the Department for section 19AB exemptions at more than one location. Each section 19AB exemption application is assessed by the Department according to whether there is evidence of an identified need for the locum at the medical practice.

c)   The Medicare provider number restrictions under section 19AB of the Act were implemented to promote equity of access to medical services for all Australians. Allowing OTDs and FGAMS to address short term needs in medical practices is consistent with these aims.