

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-167

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: AUSTRALIAN STANDARD GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATION –  
REMOTENESS AREAS (ASGC-RA) SYSTEM.

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

Can the Government explain why it refuses to undertake an independent, comprehensive review of the ASGC-RA classification system when there are glaring anomalies such as the classification of Hobart as being equally rural as the small rural towns of Gundagai, Deniliquin, Cootamundra and Tumut in NSW, noting that the author of a recent "technical" review of the ASGC-RA was conducted by the architects of the ASGC-RA?

Answer:

The Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA) classification system was developed and is maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It divides Australia into geographical areas based on physical remoteness from goods and services. A town's Remoteness Areas classification is calculated by measuring its remoteness and physical road distance to nearby urban centres of varying population sizes. The ASGC-RA classification system has only been used as a measure of eligibility for a number of targeted rural health programs for 18 months which is insufficient time to determine the full impact of the use of the classification system.

The National Centre for Social Applications of Geographical Information Systems (GISCA) at the University of Adelaide completed a review of the system in early 2011 and its advice and analysis was carefully considered by the Department of Health and Ageing. The GISCA review identified that overall the ASGC-RA classification system is a credible, reliable and robust system.

The Department continues to monitor the impact of the use of the ASGC-RA system, particularly in relation to any changes to the number of doctors working in rural and remote areas.