

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-177

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: DISTRICT OF WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Sue Boyce asked:

- a) What are the implications for practices providing extended models of care that are not classified as Districts of Workforce Shortage when seeking to attract doctors?
- b) How many practices are there in metropolitan and regional areas (RRMA 1-3) classified as Districts of Workforce Shortage?

Answer:

- a) Overseas trained doctors (OTD) and foreign graduates of an accredited medical school (FGAMS) who have not completed the ten year moratorium requirement under section 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) are required to practise within a district of workforce shortage (DWS) for their medical specialty. In cases where an OTD or FGAMS is seeking to practise privately at a medical practice located within a non-DWS area for their specialty, the medical practitioner will generally be restricted from obtaining a Medicare provider number to cover on-going full-time private practice at the location.

Due to the operation of section 19AB of the Act, a medical practice located within a non-DWS area will generally be restricted from employing an OTD or FGAMS into private practice with access to the Medicare benefits arrangements on an ongoing full-time basis.

The after-hours period is considered to meet the requirements of DWS across Australia for all medical specialties. Medical practices seeking to employ OTDs or FGAMS to provide extended care during the after-hours period will not be restricted from doing this by the Medicare provider number restrictions under section 19AB of the Act. The Department of Health and Ageing defines the after-hours period as:

- 6pm to 8am Monday to Friday; and
 - All day Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays.
- b) The Department provides advice concerning the district of workforce shortage (DWS) classification of every street address in Australia for the specialty of general practice through the locator map on the DoctorConnect website: www.doctorconnect.gov.au/

The Department does not collect statistics on the number of medical practices that are located within areas that are considered to be DWS at a given time. This data is not collected as the DWS status of a particular practice may be subject to change in line with the quarterly updates of the latest Medicare billing statistics.