

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000308

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** Rural Health Workforce Agencies

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Watt, Murray

**Question:**

- a) What is involved in the new Rural Workforce Agency program?
- b) What programs are being redesigned?
- c) Where is the funding coming from?
- d) Over what period will the funding be provided?
- e) Have any programs been cut to pay for this measure?
- f) Can you provide a breakdown of the proposed expenditure by state and territory?

**Answer:**

- a) The objective of the new Rural Workforce Agency program is to contribute to addressing health workforce shortages and maldistribution in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The expected outcomes are focused on meeting current and future community health workforce needs through workforce planning. This is done by:

- Identification of needs and undertaking activities in three key priority areas:
  - Access – improving access and continuity of access to essential primary health care;
  - Quality of access – building health workforce capability; and
  - Future planning – growing the sustainability of the health workforce.
- Collaboration with relevant stakeholders through establishing formal networks of consultation.
- Delivery of programs, including the Rural Locum Relief Program and Five Year Overseas Trained Doctors Scheme.
- National representation of rural workforce agencies and their interests.

- b) Programs being redesigned
  - 1. Rural and Remote General Practitioner Program.
  - 2. International Recruitment Scheme comprising:
    - Rural Locum Relief Program;
    - Five Year Overseas Trained Doctors Scheme;
    - Additional Assistance Scheme;
    - Rural Health Professional Program; and
    - International Recruitment Schemes.
  - 3. Go Rural.
- c) Funding has been redistributed from the realignment and consolidation of the programs listed under the response to part b) above.
- d) 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2020.
- e) Administrative efficiencies have been identified within the program. Funding for the delivery of the three key outcome areas identified in response to part a) has not been reduced as part of the program redesign.

Some funding previously directed towards international recruitment has been reduced, with greater effort being put towards supporting the increased supply of domestically trained workforce into rural based positions.

- f) The program will be offered to market through a restricted, non-competitive grant opportunity and open only to current providers.

For this reason the specific breakdown of the expenditure by state and territory is not available for release at this time in the tender process.

Once contracts are executed with the Commonwealth funding information will be made available on the Department of Health's website.