

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-032

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Shortage of Paediatric Ophthalmologists

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

In Australia, where 18.8 per cent of the population are aged below 15 years, there are only 20.3 full time equivalent paediatric ophthalmologists many of whom are nearing retirement age. There is no paediatric ophthalmologist in the ACT, Tasmania and very soon the second largest city in NSW – Newcastle will be without a paediatric ophthalmologist. What is the government doing to address the serious shortage of paediatric ophthalmologists in Australia?

Answer:

Specialist training remains primarily a state government responsibility as most specialists are trained in the public hospital system.

The Commonwealth is contributing to the future medical specialist workforce by increasing training capacity through the Specialist Training Program (STP). The STP will increase the capacity of national training posts for medical specialist trainees from 360 posts in 2010 to 900 ongoing posts by 2014.

The STP currently funds eight training posts for specialist ophthalmologists. Three of these eight posts identify paediatric ophthalmology as a component of their training.

Paediatric ophthalmology was identified as a key priority area in the 2013 STP national selection process, which is currently underway.