

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 1 – 2 June 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000315

OUTCOME: 3 - Access to Medical and Dental Services

Topic: Dental Care - Voluntary Dental Graduate Year Program

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

How many dentists had completed the Voluntary Dental Graduate Year Program before the program was evaluated and on what basis was the voluntary dental graduate year programme deemed not to be achieving its objectives?

Answer:

The Government decided to redirect funding from this programme to fund other health priorities in the 2015-16 Budget. By May 2015, 98 dentists had completed the programme. The majority of positions funded under the programme have been in public health services, which are the primary responsibility of state and territory governments.

Due to significant disparities of the oral health workforce between metropolitan and rural/remote areas, the Government's major focus is on encouraging graduates to practise in small rural/regional towns and in remote areas.

Given that almost 80 per cent of the total graduates of the Voluntary Dental Graduate Year and Oral Health Therapist Graduate Year programmes were undertaken in metropolitan (46.2 per cent) and inner regional (31.5 per cent) areas, the Government will focus its support more directly on distribution issues of the dental workforce in small rural/regional towns and remote areas.