

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 1 – 2 June 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000522

OUTCOME: 8 - Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Bonded Medical Places

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Brown, Carol

Question:

- a) What are the current arrangements for medical students under the Bonded Medical Places scheme where they choose not to complete the return of service obligations?
- b) What is the average amount paid back to the Commonwealth when this occurs?
- c) How much reimbursement was received by the Commonwealth in payments from former students failing to complete their bonding requirements in 2012-13? 2013-14?
- d) What is the justification for cutting the return of service obligations from 6 years to 1 year?
- e) Has modelling been undertaken to predict what impact this will have on the number of doctors located in the bush?
- f) Has modelling been undertaken to predict how many additional students will now complete their return of service obligations?
- g) Was any change in the amount being paid back to the Commonwealth as a result of changes in students completing their return of service obligations accounted for in this budget measure?

Answer:

- a) The Department of Health corresponds with the student in question and an investigation occurs around why the return of service obligation has not been completed. If the participant is found to have breached their agreement with the Commonwealth, a breach notice, requiring the participant to repay to the Commonwealth may be issued.
- b) The best available information indicates that between 2004 and 2015, the average repaid by Bonded Medical Places participants who chose not to complete their return of service obligation was \$40,941.42.
- c) Our systems show one reported repayment in 2012-13 of \$45,605.77, and repayments amounting to \$353,903.85 in 2013-14.
- d) To improve consistency with other Commonwealth workforce programmes and requirements. The change to the return of service obligation is occurring in the context of a much wider change. The new Health Workforce Scholarship Scheme which starts in 2016 (and the BMP will be administered as part of this programme) will have a

broader requirement for other participating health students and professionals (nursing and allied health) to complete a one year return of service.

- e) No, however the best available evidence indicates that 12 months is an effective length of time to encourage longer term commitment to rural practice.
- f) No.
- g) No. Budgeting for repayments would require an acknowledgement that individuals will breach their agreements and not complete their return of service obligation. The expectation for all commencing participants in this Scheme has always been that they will complete their agreed return of service.