

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 & 30 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-001034

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: After Hours GP Services

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

Please outline in detail what the measure in the budget (p119 Budget Paper 2) PHN – supporting after-hours care is designed to do?

Answer:

The 2017-18 Budget announced Primary Health Network (PHN) funding of \$145.5 million for a further two years (2017-18 and 2018-19) to address difficulties in access to after hours primary health services and ensure continuity of services in their local community. The funding for each PHN takes into account the additional needs of rural and remote areas.

Continued funding for PHNs will ensure improved access to after hours primary health care services for all Australians and complements the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) After Hours Incentive and the After Hours GP Helpline to provide varied after hours options to help meet the needs of the community.

Localised understanding of community needs is critical to after hours service models to determine where after hours services are most needed. As each PHN region is different, the locally tailored solutions vary. PHNs will work with key local stakeholders to plan, coordinate, and support population-based after hours services with a focus on addressing gaps in after hours provision, at-risk populations and improved service integration particularly where the PIP After Hours Incentive may not reach.

Initiatives undertaken by PHNs include:

- Support for after hours GP collaboratives;
- Support for the extension of pharmacy opening hours in the after hours period;
- Provision of after hours care to residential aged care facilities;
- Street doctor and outreach programs for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness; and
- Targeted grants program to maximize after hours primary care service availability.