

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-236

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: SPECIALIST STAFF

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Di Natale

Question:

In Budget Estimates Hearing Wednesday, 30 May 2012 Ms Flynn stated that specialist staff was recruited in 2009 and 2010, after which the professional needs of the recruited staff were identified and training commenced in 2012:

- a) Please provide copies of the job descriptions that were used in recruiting the staff
- b) Was the need for the high level of compassion and empathy required for these specialised positions identified as a professional need?
- c) Why weren't the professional needs of the staff identified prior to, or at the time of, appointment;
- d) How many contracts for the specialists so appointed have been renewed? Does the Authority think that this is a satisfactory outcome?
- e) What were the reasons for the non-renewal of contracts?
- f) Does the Authority view this process as having been a factor in delaying or derailing the achievement of the targets originally stated by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd?

Answer:

- a) All DonateLife Network staff are employed by state and territory governments which determine job descriptions based on nationally agreed roles and responsibilities for each position. These roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and updated as part of the negotiation of successive state and territory funding agreements. The most recent DonateLife Roles and Responsibilities Guidelines is published on the DonateLife website at www.donatelife.gov.au/media/docs/DLN_Roles_and_Responsibilities_Guidelines_160712.pdf
- b) Yes. Refer to c).

- c) The specific professional needs required of these individuals to fulfil their function as donation specialists were identified during the implementation phase leading up to the recruitment of these individuals from as early as late 2008. The ongoing development needs of the staff were assessed after they were recruited.

In the first instance, it was agreed that doctors and nurses with substantial professional experience were recruited to the DonateLife Network positions. These individuals came to these positions already possessing high levels of compassion and empathy required for them to carry out their demanding clinical roles. In their day-to-day work, they had dealt with patients and their families in crisis, those facing major life-threatening circumstances and, in many instances, dealt with the dying and those experiencing the death of a loved one. As a vast majority of these individuals were recruited with intensive care backgrounds, they had already experienced organ and tissue donation to some extent.

Prior to their recruitment, many of these individuals had undertaken specific organ and tissue donation training via the Australasian Donor Awareness Program program which focused on the compassionate and empathetic request for donation. Those that had not undertaken this training were required to do so soon after their recruitment.

In addition, a number of the successful recruits had taken part in the three year National Organ Donor Collaborative to increase organ and tissue donation in hospitals across Australia that had preceded introduction of the national reform agenda. This had involved training on multiple aspects of organ and tissue donation.

It took 18 months for the full contingent of DonateLife Network specialist staff to be recruited. As each jurisdiction completed its recruitment, intensive three-day induction training was undertaken according to a national organ and tissue donation curriculum.

The Professional Education program described in Question on Notice E12-235 has been developed to meet the ongoing professional development needs of the staff.

- d) A percentage of the contracts for the hospital based donation specialists have been renewed. As these positions comprise part of the funding agreement between the government and the states/territories, the terms and conditions of these agreements prevent the disclosure of the content without prior approval of all signatories.
- e) Refer to d).
- f) No. The Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority (AOTDTA) does not view the non-renewal of contracts for some donation specialist positions as an issue.

As advised in Question on Notice E12-226, the only official publicly stated targets are 23-25 dpmp by 2018 and 16.3 dpmp by end 2012. In identifying a trajectory towards 2018, the AOTDTA notes that international experience shows that significant reform will take up to ten years and that there will be some years of distinct improvement, as well as some years of consolidation.