

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 19 October 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000545

OUTCOME: 6 - Ageing and Aged Care

Topic: Access to Aged Care Services

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Question:

- a) Given that access to aged care services is dependent on the effectiveness of the MAC portal and the capacity of individual providers to work with this portal, what actions has the Department taken to ensure the effectiveness of the referral process for both aged care consumers and service providers?
- b) Has the department undertaken an assessment of whether resources offered to support providers to make adjustments necessary to implement MAC and portals are adequate and suitable?
- c) If so, what are the resources?
- d) If not, why not?
- e) Has the Department offered support specifically to CALD providers to set themselves up on MAC and implement the reforms to community and home support packages?

Answer:

- a) The Department of Health has implemented a number of improvements to My Aged Care to improve the referral process.

From March to September 2016, the Department undertook a comprehensive review of the My Aged Care Contact Centre and made significant improvements to a number of processes for Contact Centre staff. This included reducing the number of referrals from the contact centre to assessors and service providers that had incomplete information; and reducing the volume of referrals sent to service providers where a client assessment was yet to occur. Overall the contact centre enhancement program has seen improvements to:

- the average processing time when responding to referrals;
- the average waiting time for callers to the contact centre;
- the accuracy of information provided to all callers; and
- the total capacity of the contact centre.

In June 2016, a new webform was also introduced specifically for health professionals to improve their referral process. The webform was designed in consultation with the sector and improves the waiting time for consumers to have referrals processed, as well as the client information available to service providers and assessors.

The Department has also conducted five My Aged Care co-design “discovery” workshops in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne during September and October 2016. This included one specifically focused on the access requirements of diverse needs groups. These workshops involved collaboration from a wide range of participants from the aged care sector, and the intent was to identify improvements needed in My Aged Care policy, process and systems. Issues raised are being progressed through the next stage of My Aged Care development.

- b) One of the key areas of focus identified by participants during the co-design “discovery” workshops included solutions to improve usability of the system and availability of information and materials, and awareness of where to find them.

The earliest opportunity to implement any system changes will be the June 2017 release. The Department is working closely with co-design participants to identify opportunities for earlier introduction of any policy/process related changes and My Aged Care information and communication materials.

- c) In addition to the recent workshops that were held, comprehensive support material to assist service providers and assessors in using the My Aged Care portals is available on the Department's website. This includes fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, detailed provider portal user guides, quick reference guides, webinars and videos. A My Aged Care Provider and Assessor Helpline is available Monday to Friday between 8am to 8pm and Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm (ph.1800 836 799).

At every major update to My Aged Care, the Department also releases a Summary of Changes document. Regular updates are also made to My Aged Care Provider Portal User Guides, Quick Reference Guides and Fact Sheets to reflect new functionality and process/policy changes. The most recent update was September 2016.

- d) Not applicable.

- e) In 2015 the Department released a range of resources for CALD communities and organisations to assist them to apply for new residential and home care places. This information can be accessed on the Department’s website. When a new provider needs to be set up on My Aged Care they are provided with advice and support materials to assist them and can contact the Provider and Assessor Helpline if they require support.

CALD providers participated in the My Aged Care co-design ‘discovery’ workshops mentioned above and their feedback will be included in future improvement opportunities.