

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 19 October 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000710

OUTCOME: 6 - Ageing and Aged Care

Topic: Workforce Development

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Polley, Helen

Question:

During the Election Campaign the Government said it would support the sector to develop a workforce strategy. What has occurred to deliver on this promise? The Department has also widely reported on the fact that the aged care workforce itself is ageing and the sector faces difficulties in attracting and retaining workers. What do you understand are the reasoning for the ageing workforce? What strategies are in place to attract young worker to the aged care sector? An analysis of wage rates for Assistants in Nursing, Personal Care Nurses and Enrolled Nurses show those working in an aged care facility earn between 10-12 per cent less than those working in a public hospital. What role do you think wages will play in the future of the aged care workforce? What strategies are in place to address this disparity in wage rates? Around 90 per cent of personal care workers in the aged care sector are women. What analysis have you done as to why this is the case? What strategies does the government have in place to specifically attract more to the aged care workforce?

Answer:

The aged care workforce is a shared responsibility between the Government and the aged care sector with many of the levers to influence the workforce resting with employers/providers.

The Government's view is that aged care providers are best able to determine their workforce needs and has indicated the development of a workforce strategy is best led by the sector with assistance provided by the Government.

Many issues that would be covered in a workforce strategy are the responsibility of industry rather than Government. The development of an Aged Care Workforce Strategy provides an opportunity for the sector to organise and drive change across the aged care workforce as it moves towards a more consumer-driven, market-based approach as broadly outlined in the Aged Care Roadmap.

In response to the evidence of an ageing workforce, issues with early career retention and other factors influencing the nursing workforce, the government has established the National Nursing and Midwifery Education Advisory Network (NNMEAN).

The NNMEAN is an advisory body responsible for the provision of high level strategic advice to Health Ministers on issues relating to the future planning, coordination and development of the nursing and midwifery workforce in Australia.

The NNMEAN is working with a range of stakeholders that represent the nursing and midwifery professions in all aspects of the health sector to develop a work plan for approval by Health Ministers.

In relation to wage issues, while the Government has an overarching role as funder of programmes and services, aged care providers are responsible, together with their staff, for negotiating wages and conditions within workplace relations legislation overseen by the Fair Work Commission.

The Aged Care Legislation Review commenced on 22 September 2016. The independent Review covers nine key matters including the effectiveness of workforce strategies in aged care services including strategies for education, recruitment, retention and funding for aged care workers. The review provides for public consultation. The final report on the Review will be completed by August 2017.