

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2013 - 2014, 28 February 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000107

OUTCOME: 8 - Indigenous Health

Topic: Remote Area Health Corp

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: McLucas Jan

Question:

Current funding for the Remote Area Health Corp (RAHC) expires on 30 June 2014.

- a. Will the program be funded in the next financial year? If so, how much is allocated for RAHC?
- b. Please detail what action has been taken to continue funding for RAHC. Is the funding currently subject to review and if so, by whom?
- c. Has the Minister or the department consulted with RAHC about funding arrangements to secure certainty for the future of this program?
- d. How much funding is budgeted for this program?
- e. Could you please outline the purpose and scope of the RAHC program?
- f. Please provide a performance update, including the number of health locum positions supported under the program.
- g. Have any evaluations of the program been undertaken? If so, when was the evaluation undertaken? Please detail the findings of the evaluation.

Answer:

a) to d)

The Government is assessing all grant spending for consistency with Government priorities and commitments. This includes Remote Area Health Corp (RAHC) funding beyond 30 June 2014.

- e) The RAHC is a short-term health professional placement programme that supports the remote primary health care sector in the Northern Territory. RAHC helps to meet primary health care workforce shortages in remote areas by providing recruitment, training, professional development, transport and placements to approximately 450 health professionals each year.
- f) Under the RAHC programme, 548 health professionals were placed between July 2012 and June 2013. Between July and December 2013, 282 health professionals were placed under the programme.

Under RAHC, health professionals are placed in vacancies and are not locums temporarily filling the duties of another employed health professional.

- g) The Final Report on the Evaluation of the Child Health Check Initiative and the Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative was published in March 2011 and included an evaluation of RAHC.

Key findings found that the RAHC has added to the workforce capacity in the Northern Territory; and workforce issues remain a challenge to improving primary health care services in remote communities.

Reference: Allen and Clarke 2011, Evaluation of the Child Health Check Initiative and the Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative: Summary Report, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.