

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into the 2020-21 Budget Estimates

Disability, Ageing and Carers portfolio: 15 December 2020

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Witnesses:

- Hon Luke Donnellan MP, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers
- Professor Euan Wallace AM, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
- Mr Ben Rimmer, Deputy Secretary, Housing
- Mr Argiri Alisandratos, Deputy Secretary, Children, Families, Community and Disability
- Mr Greg Stenton, Deputy Secretary, Children, Families, Community and Disability
- Ms Simone Corin, Director, Quality Improvement and System Reform
- Ms Jackie Keamey, Director, Seniors, Ageing and Carers
- Mr James Maclsaac, Director, Disability
- Mr Philip O'Meara, Director, Disability and Communities

QUESTION 1

Number of people with disabilities are restricted from attending day care facilities according to venue density requirements

Mr O'BRIEN: ...can you provide us with the medical advice that you have been given as minister that says that they still cannot open when those same people can go to the supermarket, can go to the cinema, can go to various other places? Why can't they go to their day care?

Mr DONNELLAN: Well, I do not have the advice available with me right away, but obviously we are guided by public health in all of these matters, and we take—

Mr D O'BRIEN: I would be happy to take it on notice if you can provide it, if it is written advice.

Mr DONNELLAN: Look, we will take that on notice and come back to you.

Source: Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Budget Estimates 2020-21, Unverified Transcript for Disability, Ageing and Carers (Minister DONNELLAN), 15 December 2020, p. 6

RESPONSE

I understand restrictions on centre-based disability day services created challenges, but they were important to reduce risk and ultimately keep vulnerable people with disability safe.

Since 22 November 2020 when Victoria moved to the Last Step of the Roadmap, people with disability have been able to attend centre-based disability services if they choose to do so. This includes people living in disability residential services.

Under current COVIDSafe Summer restrictions all industries, including centre-based disability day services, must ensure COVIDSafe principles are implemented including physical distancing and that applicable density requirements are met.

The permitted density requirement for services provided in community facilities, is now not more than one person per two square metres when electronic record keeping is used. The density limit of one per four square metres applies if manual record keeping is used.

Centre-based disability services, like all indoor settings, are considered high risk environments due to difficulties with physical distancing, and because they have less ventilation than outdoor spaces posing a greater risk of coronavirus spreading through droplets in the air.

Prior to resumption of centre-based services, providers must consider whether it is safe to resume services in their individual settings.

QUESTION 2

Number of clinical placements in the forward estimates

Ms VALLENCE: Just to follow up in terms of the clinical placements that will be provided across the forward estimates for aged care, safe patient care, how many clinical placements will there be for the \$40 million investment?

Mr DONNELLAN: I do not actually have that on hand, but it obviously is—

Ms VALLENCE: Would you be able to provide the number of placements you are targeting on notice?

Mr DONNELLAN: Look, I am happy to provide it on notice. I will just ask if we have got a specific figure. In fact I will get Jackie, if you do not mind.

Ms KEARNEY: Sorry, Minister. The Department of Health and Human Services has yet to identify a specific figure. There is work to be done to identify the craft groups that will be involved in that. So as the minister has pointed out, it will focus on nurses, but it will also focus on allied health and aged-care assistance. So based on the craft group we will be able to determine the number.

Mr DONNELLAN: It is actually a subsidy to the providers to take on the clinical placement. So it is actually a subsidy to providers.

Ms VALLENCE: Right, but you have allocated funding without specifying how many—

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Vallence, your time has expired.

Source: Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Budget Estimates 2020-21, Unverified Transcript for Disability, Ageing and Carers (Minister DONNELLAN), 15 December 2020, p. 10

RESPONSE

The \$40 million investment from the Victorian Government is to help cover the cost of introducing minimum staff-to-resident ratios in private aged care, provided that the Commonwealth Government, as the primary regulator and funder of aged care, agrees to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. This important initiative would vastly improve the quality of care in private residential aged facilities.

If the Commonwealth Government agrees to the introduction of staff-to-resident ratios, the Victorian Government's \$40 million contribution would help cover the clinical student training placement costs for thousands of additional registered nurses, enrolled nurses and personal care workers.

Initial modelling indicates that up to 20,000 placements over four years could be covered by the \$40 million investment, however precise numbers to be supported is dependent on the final design of minimum staff-to-resident ratios by the Commonwealth Government, given potential coverage across registered nurses, enrolled nurses and personal care workers.