

Question on Notice

No. 593

Asked on 26 May 2022

MR R KATTER ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON Y D'ATH)—

QUESTION

With reference to a chronic shortfall of aged care beds in rural and regional Queensland, the impacts on the elderly unable to seek the care they need leading to total displacement for some people from their own communities—

Will the Minister commit to providing respite beds in all rural and regional hospitals, including Mount Isa, so the elderly who are displaced can at least visit their kin in their twilight years?

ANSWER

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for regulating and funding aged care under the *Aged Care Act 1997* (Cth).

The Commonwealth Government subsidises short term care, including transitional care for up to 12 weeks; restorative care for up to 8 weeks; and short-term respite care for older people and/or their carer.

Queensland Health co-funds and operates 16 residential aged care facilities and 35 Multi-Purpose Health Services across Queensland. This includes a number of facilities in rural and remote areas where markets are thin, and it is not always financially viable for private/not for profit providers to operate.

Multi-Purpose Health Services combine funding for aged care services from the Commonwealth Government with State and Territory health services. This joint initiative means small regional and remote communities can offer flexible aged care services that meet the needs of the community.

I have been advised in the North West Hospital and Health Service catchment area, where Mt Isa is located, as at 31 March 2022, there was one privately run approved provider of residential aged care, which offers 74 places.

I am also advised, other facilities in the region operated by Queensland Health offer aged care beds, including Cloncurry Hospital (10 high care residential aged care places) and McKinlay Shire (Julia Creek) Multi-purpose Health Service (four high care residential aged care places and five home care places) under the Multipurpose Services Agreement with the State of Queensland.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for aged care reforms in response to the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety as outlined in its final report '*Respect, care, dignity: A generational plan for aged care in Australia*'. The final report highlights systematic failures, and poor oversight of the aged care sector, including timely access to appropriate care, market sustainability, regulation and governance, safety standards and workforce supply, particularly in regional and remote Australia.

In early 2022, States and Territories were invited for the first time to engage with the Commonwealth Government on a range of issues and intergovernmental considerations related to aged care reform. These discussions focused on those Royal Commission recommendations that have a direct impact on state-run services including hospitals.

More aged care beds in hospital settings, including for rehabilitation or restorative care, is not best practice. Older people living in hospital are at increased risk of deconditioning and increased risk of premature death.

States and Territories continue to advocate for their communities, including older Australians, who deserve quality and safe aged care services that feel like home.

Queensland looks forward to working collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government on this important reform area into the future, including improvements to better integrate aged care, disability, and hospital systems to ensure that people do not face long stays in hospital unnecessarily.