

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Question Taken on Notice

Date: 13 June 2019

Subject: Facilities for Dementia Patients

From: Member for Nelson

To: Minister for Health

Agency: Department of Health

Number: 4.31

Question: What is the government doing to make sure there are adequate facilities for dementia patients where full time care is required? What facilities are available now and what efforts are being made to train staff to look after people with dementia?

Answer:

Dementia is a group of conditions characterised by the gradual impairment of brain function. Dementia is degenerative and irreversible. This means that people living with dementia will be cared for in a range of settings including the family home, residential aged care facilities (RACF) and hospitals depending on the severity of the condition. The Australian Government is the principle funder of home support services and RACF for people experiencing dementia. Home support and RACF is provided by non-government organisations funded by the Australian Government.

NT Health provides specialist assessment and outreach services. The Memory Service is a clinical diagnostic service providing information, education and support including access to appropriate treatment options. The Psychogeriatric Service provides a person centred service to manage the psychological symptoms of dementia. The hospital based Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) service provides specialist care outreach supporting residents of RACF to prevent admissions to acute settings. People living with dementia may require medical support and or hospitalisation. The Cognitive and Delirium Care Project (CDCP) has been implemented to improve the admission pathway for people with cognitive impairment. CDCP delivers face to face mandatory training to hospital work units in the use of the Cognitive Impairment Identifier (CCI) symbol. The CCI alerts health professionals to the specialist needs of people with cognitive impairment. Trained "Cognitive Champions" are utilised to lead work with people with cognitive impairment including dementia.

All health professionals are expected to have a baseline knowledge of dementia through their professional qualifications and professional development. Further professional development is encouraged through a range of opportunities including participation in training for example the Understanding Dementia Massive Open Online Course with the University of Tasmania. All personal care assistants complete a Working with Complex Clients workshop. Ongoing development opportunities are available through the Allied Health Forum and through planned individual sessions on the wards delivered by the Psychogeriatric Service and the Memory Service. The Aged Care Unit provides regular My Aged Care advisory updates to new doctors, discharge co-ordinators and social workers.

NT Health is working with the Australian Government to explore opportunities for improved services for people experiencing dementia through the Specialist Dementia Care Program. NT Health works closely with non-government organisations who specialise in dementia care such as Dementia Support Australia, Dementia Training Australia and Dementia Australia.