



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTER CONFIRMS PLANS FOR ACUTE CARE AND AGED CARE FACILITIES (MPS's) FOR NEW ENGLAND

Minister for Ageing, the Hon Kevin Andrews, confirmed in Parliament yesterday that Multi Purpose Services will be developed in Bingara, Walcha, Warialda and Guyra.

These communities will join the already established MPS's in the New England Area Health Region of Urbenville, Boggabri, Vegetable Creek and Barraba.

In answer to a question from the Member for New England, Tony Windsor, about the formula used for the allocation of aged care beds, Minister Andrews also confirmed that the Government is reviewing the formula for bed allocation.

"Last week the Minister said that the Government was looking at increasing the age of determination of the formula from the current 70 years to 75-80 years," Mr Windsor said.

"Also he has indicated that the review will provide equitable distribution of aged care places regardless of where people live."

Mr Windsor said he would keep raising the issue of distance and community size as issues that should be taken into account when allocating aged care beds.

"The formula currently in use has no regard for distance, remoteness or smallness and hence disadvantages many smaller towns which need to look after their aged within their own town."

Mr Windsor congratulated the Minister in his attempts to improve the system and pledged his assistance on this critical issue.

(Hansard extract attached)

For Further Information contact Tony Windsor, Ph 6761 3080

Question without Notice: Health and Ageing: Aged Care

Health and Ageing: Aged Care

[Mr WINDSOR](#) (2.50 p.m.) —My question is to the Minister for Ageing. Following the minister's answer last week regarding a review of the aged care formula, could the minister elaborate on the review process? Given that the electorates of New England and Gwydir, for instance, are 500 times and 1,600 times larger respectively than many metropolitan seats and that all seats are currently governed by the same formula, is the minister willing to incorporate the parameters of distance, remoteness and community size in the review of the formula?

[Mr ANDREWS](#) —I thank the honourable member for New England for his question. I indicate to him that the process I outlined last week in reply to a question from the member for Calare involves essentially modelling the formula according to different age groups and doing that over a period of some 20 to 30 years. We are trying to plan in a way that makes sure that we meet the aged care needs of people right throughout Australia into the future.

The basis of that formula is to provide equitable distribution of aged care places, regardless of where people live. There are special provisions for those in rural and regional parts of Australia. For example, there is weighting in favour of them in terms of capital funding and also in relation to some of the places that are allocated to regional and rural parts of Australia. That interest in those regions of Australia will continue to be in the mind of the government when making these decisions.

I indicate for the benefit of the House that since 1999 some 279 additional aged care places have been allocated to the New England planning region, worth some \$3.4 million in annual recurrent funding. Aged care providers in the region have also received some \$2.3 million in capital funding. A little while ago, I was able to visit aged care providers in the honourable member for New England's electorate and had a well attended forum of aged care providers, which the honourable member was present at, and I was able to participate with him in the opening of a new home at Uralla in the New England electorate. The provision of aged care services in rural parts of Australia is done in a flexible way, particularly through multipurpose services. Currently there are four MPSs operating in New England, at Urbenville, Boggabri, Vegetable Creek and Barraba.

Mr Anderson interjecting—

[Mr ANDREWS](#) —I am advised by the Acting Prime Minister that they are also in Gwydir. There are also plans to expand in that region generally the MPS programs at Bingara, Walcha, Warialda and Guyra. This is a commitment on the part of the government towards the provision of aged care and health services generally to the residents of the New England region of Australia, like we attempt to do in a fair way for residents and people who live in all parts of Australia.