

# Options for essential worker housing in NSW

Hearing – 3/12/2024

## Questions on Notice

### QUESTION 1 – Page 35

**SUZANNE HARRIS:** We currently have a number. I think we've got 44 leases across Milton, Shellharbour, Nowra, and Wollongong, which are the areas we're focusing on. We already have those in place.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** For those 44 leases, what does it look like from the employee's point of view? Do you lease it and the cost of the lease is then paid for by the health worker, or do they get a subsidised lease? How does it work?

**SUZANNE HARRIS:** I think there are various levels. It might be easier to take this on notice. But certainly, there is a ministerial policy around medical officers that dictates how we charge. For example, if you have juniors rotating from Wollongong to Shoalhaven, we are required to provide accommodation without cost. In two of our hospitals we have some internal accommodation – not a lot – but that's available to any staff member, including nursing staff. That's at a rate that's determined very reasonably around, I guess, how critical that position is and how critically it needs to be replaced. We certainly don't hesitate to access private accommodation if we need to for short-term contracts for key workers. As far as some of the other part of the question, I might need to – I'm not sure about how the billing process goes, because I don't have any involvement in that.

### ANSWER

Section 20 of the Public Hospital Medical Officers (State) Award 2023 covers Board and Accommodation.

Under the new Ministry of Health JMO Living Away from Home Reimbursement Grant, while on an eligible rotation requiring relocation, Medical Officers are eligible for a subsidy on the accommodation if they provide evidence that they are paying for rent or a mortgage for a primary residence elsewhere.

If the Medical Officer chooses to reside in a District leased unit / accommodation, the District can seek reimbursement for the period the JMO is residing in the unit from the Ministry under the new Grant up to \$383 per week.

If the Medical Officer chooses to source their own accommodation, they are able to apply for the subsidy directly and be reimbursed via a Payroll Reimbursement claim.

If evidence of paying rent or a mortgage for a primary residence elsewhere cannot be provided, the District charges via payroll deduction for District-provided accommodation.

Locum Medical Officers have all costs of their accommodation met by the District.

### QUESTION 2 – page 36

**Ms LIZA BUTLER:** If it's an agency nurse coming to the area to fill a gap because we've got a crisis in healthcare workers in regional areas, do agency nurses get the accommodation provided, or do they have to pay?

**SUZANNE HARRIS:** I would have to take that on notice. My understanding is that, as I said, at Shellharbour and Wollongong, we have some internal accommodation that can be used and staff use that, either at no charge or minimal charge. As far as anything else, I'm not sure. I'm happy to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

If an agency nurse or midwife requires travel and accommodation as part of their engagement, it is the responsibility of the health organisation to arrange accommodation and travel for the agency nurses and midwives, as per the NSW Health Official Travel Policy.