

Question 21 (continued)

- (c) Assess the impact that the health status of Australians has on the provision of health care facilities and services. 10

The health status of Australians has increased dramatically over the past 20 years. It has been studied and assessed through the process of epidemiology and measured using the 4 primary measures, of life expectancy, morbidity, mortality and infant mortality.

The life expectancy of Australians has increased significantly since the early 1980's when the average life expectancy for a male was 57 years and for a female was 61 years. Today life expectancy for males is close to 80 years old and the life expectancy for females is close to 85 years with females having a 1 in 4 chance of reaching 90 years old.

Although the health status of the Australian population has improved in recent years, epidemiology has discovered a high rate of morbidity, particularly as a result of 5 diseases: CVD, cancer, diabetes, mental illness and injuries. These diseases are largely caused by lifestyle related or modifiable risk factors and have therefore been identified as priority areas.

Another important characteristic of Australia's health status is the fact that Australia is an aging population. As a result of the increased life expectancy and the 'baby boomers' aging, Australia has an increasingly aging population. This is likely to

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have a large impact on the provision of health care facilities and services, as the elderly have a higher rate of reliance on health care services, in particular public services as due to economic constraints they are often unable to afford private insurance or treatment and therefore rely solely on Medicare, increasing the burden on the government and the taxpayer. It will also increase the need for the provision of an increased number of aged care facilities.

The identification of priority population groups ~~that is also likely~~ including socioeconomically disadvantaged, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, rural populations, migrants, elderly and men and women will also impact upon the provision of health services and facilities.

Services will increasingly need to be directed towards these groups, for example through free cancer screenings for SES disadvantaged and greater provision of services in rural locations.

While health care services and facilities including non institutional and institutional, public and private facilities will assist in 'cure' and therefore the improvement of Australia's health status, there needs to be an increase in primary prevention strategies to prevent people from gaining medical conditions to begin with as 'prevention is better than the cure'. This is supported by the new public health approach and Australia's current health status and will see increased facilities and resources directed towards promotion and prevention.

End of Question 21