

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-048

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Benefits

Topic: PBS SUPPLIES TO REMOTE ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICES

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

- a) Has any data been made available in the public domain by Medicare on PBS supplies to remote Aboriginal health services through the Section 100 arrangements in the ten years the program has been in operation? If not, why not?
- b) If yes, has it been detailed enough to allow for medicine supply to be compared on a regional, state/territory and national basis between Aboriginal health services and with mainstream?
- c) Are there any funds available to allow Aboriginal health services to employ a pharmacist apart from the s100 Support Allowance paid to the supplying retail pharmacy doing the supply? If not, why not?

Answer:

- a) No. Medicare Australia does not release any Aboriginal Health Services (AHS) PBS data to members of the public, or on its website.

Medicare Australia is responsible for the administration of the Remote Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) program on behalf of the Department of Health and Ageing. This includes the provision of RAAHS Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme data and information reports to the Department of Health and Ageing which as the policy owner, is responsible for the release of information to stakeholders.

The Department of Health and Ageing publishes expenditure of PBS medicines supplied under the section 100 remote area AHS arrangement for the latest financial year, by state and territory, on the Departmental website, and releases data within the constraints of the privacy provisions of the *National Health Act 1953* and the *Privacy Act 1988*.

- b) Refer to answer a)
- c) Aboriginal Health Services (AHS) funded by the Australian Government have access to Medicare benefits through arrangements under section 19(2) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*. Under these arrangements, Medicare income is able to be used at the discretion of the AHS for primary health care. An AHS could choose to use some of the Medicare income towards the cost of a pharmacist position.

Australian Government funding may also be available under the following programs:

Improving Indigenous Access to Health Care Services - Rural/Remote Workforce Supply

This ongoing 2006-07 Budget initiative (initially \$26.9 million over four years) aims to increase the number and range of health care services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in rural and remote areas. It does this by enabling Aboriginal health services to access additional GPs, nurses and allied health care professionals including pharmacists.

Family Centred Primary Health Care

This 2007-08 Budget initiative (\$28.5 million over four years) assists with the development, or expansion of, multidisciplinary teams to provide on-site and outreach comprehensive and coordinated primary health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities in rural and remote areas where mainstream services are poor. This includes the engagement of GPs, nurses and allied health care professionals including pharmacists.