

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-303

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: Medicare Benefits – Decisions of Medical Services Advisory Committee

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

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Senator: Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

In relation to MSAC's submission and evaluation process, have performance metrics been developed for MSAC in response to the HTA Review? If yes, do any of the performance indicators include target timelines for phases of the submission and evaluation process? Are these publically available and if not why not? What specific steps are currently being taken to improve the processes within MSAC? The PBAC evaluation cycle is 17 weeks. Is there any expectation that MSAC will achieve similar process efficiency?

Answer:

New Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) processes introduced on 1 January 2011 have target timelines for the two phases of the process. Deadlines for receipt of papers to be considered at meetings of MSAC and its subcommittees are publicly available, allowing Applicants to plan the timing of their application.

If an application is deemed eligible for assessment, all applications are initially considered by MSAC's Protocol Advisory Sub Committee (PASC), which defines the type of evidence that needs to be submitted, and the way in which this evidence needs to be presented. PASC does this by establishing a decision analytic protocol through a process informed by public consultation and expert advice. From receipt of the proposed decision analytic protocol (DAP) to the public release of the final DAP, the expected overall timeframe is 38 weeks.

Following this protocol development stage, the Applicant can elect either to provide a submission based assessment (in which the applicant prepares their own report assessing the evidence, in accordance with the final DAP established by PASC), or to have an assessment report prepared by a health technology assessment group contracted by the Department of Health and Ageing. The assessment report is then considered by MSAC's Evaluation Sub-Committee prior to consideration by MSAC itself.

Although timeframes can vary depending on when Applicants submit evidence in relation to the committee meeting dates (which are published), the expected overall timeframe for a full

assessment is 52-58 weeks where the applicant chooses to provide a submission based assessment report, and 60-78 weeks where the applicant prefers a contracted assessment.

Many of the steps currently being undertaken to improve the processes within MSAC have been a result of public feedback. The Department is committed to ongoing stakeholder engagement and will continue to improve MSAC processes based on feedback from stakeholders. Some initiatives being introduced include: conducting information sessions on the new MSAC process; establishing a dedicated team of staff with responsibility for the management of each application and providing a single contact for applicants throughout the process; and developing fit for purpose assessments.

While the full assessment process has been implemented, fit-for-purpose assessments are in the early stages of development. It is intended that new applications follow an assessment that reflects the risk of the proposal both in terms of clinical and patient safety risks, and the financial risk to the Medicare Benefits Schedule. The goal of fit-for-purpose assessment is to ensure that the Health Technology Assessment process followed to collect evidence and for scrutiny provided by MSAC and its sub-committees matches the risk of the application. Fit-for-purpose assessments may result in further process efficiencies.