

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: E12-352

OUTCOME 5: Primary Care

Topic: Medicare Locals

Type of Question: Hansard Page 30, 31 May 2012

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Senator: Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

As funding for Medicare Locals is an ongoing program why has the Tasmania Medicare Local advertised in the Weekend Australian of 19-20 May 2012 for a project manager until 30 June 2013?

Answer:

Funding for individual programs delivered by Medicare Locals is provided through Program Schedules under a Deed for Funding, each with fixed periods. It is the responsibility of an employer to make employees aware of the fixed nature of any project/program activities funded by the Commonwealth.

On 19 May 2012, the Tasmania Medicare Local advertised for a 'Project Manager – Primary Care Electronic Health Record deployment and adoption', until 30 June 2013, with 'continuation dependent on funding'. The position relates to funding to be provided to Medicare Locals over two years to assist general practitioners and other health care providers to adopt and use the new eHealth records system, as per the media release of 18 May 2012 from the Minister for Health, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP (Attachment A).



**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
Minister for Health**

MEDIA RELEASE

18 May 2012

\$50 million for Medicare Locals to help rollout eHealth records

Health Minister Tanya Plibersek today announced \$50 million over two years will be made available to Medicare Locals – networks that support frontline health providers – to assist GPs and other health care providers to adopt and use the Gillard Government's new eHealth records system.

Ms Plibersek said the funding was part of a package to support doctors and other health professionals to help rollout the new system.

"Family doctors co-ordinate healthcare for most patients, so we know they have an important role to play in the eHealth records system," Ms Plibersek said.

"eHealth records will ensure doctors can access a patient's medical information in one convenient online location, reducing errors and making diagnosis and treatment quicker and easier."

Ms Plibersek said the funding for Medicare Locals will enable them to provide practical training to GP practices and other health care providers and to drive awareness and consumer literacy of the potential of eHealth records at a regional level.

"The practical training will include how to get the practice ready for the eHealth record including how to achieve data quality, the registration process for eHealth records, engagement and support of the practice's patients."

"To assist providers link up to the system, Medicare Locals also will work with other health care providers – allied health, nursing, and community based specialists – as well as with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, non-government organisations, professional associations and hospitals."

The \$50 million is the final piece of a support package for doctors to help rollout the new eHealth records system and is in addition to the Government's \$233.7 million investment announced in the Budget.

It complements the three other initiatives already announced, which are:

- From February 2013, up to \$50,000 in Practice Incentive Program payments for each practice that shows it is capable of: (1) secure messaging, (2) integrating healthcare identifiers into electronic practice records, (3) using data records and clinical coding of diagnoses, (4) the capability to upload Shared Health Summaries and Event Summaries using compliant eHealth record software, and (5) electronic transfer of prescriptions to a prescription exchange service. Further consultation with the profession and professional associations will occur in the coming weeks about how the criteria will apply in practice.
- The ability for GPs to use longer consultations (Medicare Benefit Scheme general attendance items B, C and D) when creating or adding to a shared health summary on an eHealth record which involves taking a patient's medical history as part of a consultation.
- The continuation of the Practice Nurse Incentive Program which provides up to \$125,000 per year to eligible general practices towards the cost of a practice nurse. Practices can choose to have their practice nurse talk to patients about the eHealth record, and help patients set up their record.

From 1 July 2012, interested Australians will be able to register to create their own eHealth record.

For more information, please contact the minister's office on 02 6277 7220