

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30 May 2011

Question: E11-498

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: MENTAL HEALTH-BETTER ACCESS EVALUATION

Hansard Page: CA 51

Senator Siewert asked:

- a) Is there a different process at the current time between 12 and 18? It is not going to be that process. Do you have to take on notice that figure from the 12 to the 18?
- b) I have got this fact sheet. That it not how I understood it. This was the difference between one and 10, 87 per cent, so I was asked for between 12 and 18.

Answer:

- a) From 1 November 2011, the cap on Medicare rebates for eligible people with a diagnosed mental disorder will be changed from 12 sessions per year to ten. Following the initial course of treatment (which remains unchanged at a maximum of six sessions) consumers will be able to access more sessions up to a total of ten. Consumers are also eligible for ten group sessions per calendar year in addition to their individual sessions.

People currently receiving services under Better Access will be able to access up to 12 individual and/or up to 12 group sessions prior to 30 October 2011. In exceptional circumstances, and where there is a clinical need, they can access an additional six individual services prior to 30 October 2011.

From 1 November 2011, the new arrangements will apply. Individuals who have already accessed ten or more individual and ten or more group services by 1 November 2011 will not be eligible for additional services until 1 January 2012.

The Department of Health and Ageing is working on implementation arrangements and further information will be made available to consumers and providers in the near future.

- b) The findings of the Better Access evaluation showed that almost three-quarters of people who access services used between one and six sessions a year. The majority (87 per cent) of current Better Access users received between one and ten sessions and will therefore be unaffected by this change.

In 2010, the number of individuals who had more than 12 and up to 18 services represent 7.4 per cent of all people who used Better Access services in that calendar year.