

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

The committee met on Wednesday, 22 October 2014 from 9 am to 11 pm.

The committee called the department and agencies of the Health portfolio, including the Australian Sports Commission, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), GP SuperClinics, the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, Medicare Locals, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Among other issues, the following matters were discussed:

- general matters regarding staffing
- the government's response to the Ebola epidemic currently affecting West Africa, including the training of Australian medical staff for a theoretical regional Ebola outbreak as part of Biosecurity and Emergency Response
- the allocation of additional hospital funding between the states and the effect of reward funding on hospital efficiency and hospital funding over the forward estimates
- the transition from Medicare Locals to Primary Health Networks
- Partners in Recovery and other mental health issues
- changes to GP SuperClinics
- the Medicare Benefits Schedule, the Medicare levy and changes to the safety net
- the impact of the proposed co-payment on pathology businesses, and bulk billing rates for pathology and diagnostics
- dental programs
- the scoping study for the sale of Australian Hearing
- the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- the community pharmacy agreement
- the Life-Saving Drugs Programme
- the regulation of hemp as a food and chemicals used in cosmetic products
- cannabinoids for medical use
- medical graduates and intern programs
- a review of private health premiums
- the Medibank GP access trial
- the review of tobacco plain packaging and anti-tobacco programs
- palliative care
- research priorities for the Medical Research Future Fund
- trends in methamphetamine use and rehabilitation services
- the status of the Health Star Rating System for front-of-pack labelling for packaged foods
- current research on the health implications of wind turbines.