

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

The committee met on Monday 1 June 2015 from 9 am until 9.56 pm.

The committee called the Department and agencies of the Health portfolio, including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the National Mental Health Commission, the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority (IHPA), the Private Health Insurance Administration Council and the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman.

Among other issues, the following matters were discussed:

- the Health Budget lock-up,
- Flexible Funds –their framework and budget cuts,
- the Medical Research Future Fund,
- cuts to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-payments,
- in relation to the Therapeutic Goods Administration, computer systems, IT staffing and corporate services,
- Departmental staffing, particularly in relation to the Senior Executive Service,
- the configuration of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare,
- a reduction in funding for mental health programs,
- in relation to Primary Health Networks, their capacity for commencement on 1 July 2015, costs to run the process, contracts, geographical boundaries, indigenous health and mental health,
- the closure of 61 Medicare Locals at 30 June 2015, including staffing transfers and redundancies and lease cancellations,
- the North Adelaide Medicare Local,
- the review of the medical benefits schedule by the Primary Health Care Advisory Group,
- the COAG Health Council and National Mental Health Commission report,
- the funding of Headspace and the percentage of funding allocated from the Budget,
- the new national mental health plan and the mental health nursing incentive,
- the partners in recovery program, including Medicare locals, referrals and regions,
- in relation to the National Mental Health Commission, staffing issues and the NMHC Review, including feedback to the Department and funding for frontline mental health,
- the practice incentive program for after-hours services and the GP after-hours helpline,
- GP Superclinics savings,
- hospital funding adjustments from MYEFO to the 2015-16 Budget,
- calculations of forward estimates for hospital funding,
- ACT public hospital funding between 2013-14 and 2017-18,
- the Commonwealth agreement with the Northern Territory for payments,
- the Mersey hospital in Tasmania,
- in relation to the IHPA, an update on activity-based funding and targets for improving health,

- the Child Dental Benefits Schedule budget,
- cuts to the National Partnership Agreement for Adult Public Dental Services,
- the Medicare indexation freeze including in relation to GP remuneration,
- cuts to the Healthy Kids Check program,
- the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce,
- the privatisation of Australian Hearing and funding by Australian Hearing for cochlear implants,
- bulk-billing rates,
- Expression of Interest for health payments, and
- the abolition of the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman and the merger of the Private Health Insurance Administration Council with the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority.