



Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates 2023-24
Thursday, 15 February 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 10.53pm in Committee Room 2S1.

The committee called the following agencies of the Health and Aged Care portfolio:

- Professional Services Review;
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency;
- Cancer Australia;
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand;
- National Rural Health Commissioner;
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission;
- Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority;
- Inspector-General of Aged Care;
- Australian Sports Commission;
- Sport Integrity Australia;
- Australian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Agency; and
- Office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

Some topics discussed by the committee include:

Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) – Whole of Portfolio / Corporate Matters

- Average Staffing Levels;
- Increases to the number of mental health care workers under the Better Access Initiative;
- Update of external reviews commissioned by the Minister of Health and Aged Care;
- Reproductive healthcare, including funding for various maternity and reproductive services;
- Impact of the 'Right to disconnect' legislation;
- Appointments of former senior departmental officials;
- Vyvance shortages;
- Status of government responses to the Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into ADHD and the Senate Select Committee Inquiry into Dental Services;
- Indemnity insurance for midwives and MBS taskforce recommendations on midwifery;
- Guidance on vaccine mandates, including batch testing of covid vaccines; and
- National COVID-19 Clinical Network Taskforce.

DoHAC: Outcome 2 – Individual Health Benefits

- Negotiations in relation to the Community Pharmacy Agreements;
- Bulk billing rates and data;
- Medicare Benefits Schedule Review, including gender affirming healthcare and commissioning parents in surrogacy arrangements;

- General use items on the prostheses list; and
- Increasing premiums related to private health insurance.

Professional Services Review

- Structures by which the Professional Services Review Scheme investigates allegations of misconduct by health professionals in the Medicare context; and
- Complaints referral process to the Professional Services Review.

DoHAC: Outcome 1 – Health Policy, Access and Support

- Visits to Urgent Care Clinics;
- Bulk-billing rates in the Australian Capital Territory;
- National Immunisation Program, including accessibility and eligibility for free shingles vaccinations;
- Newborn bloodspot screening program; and
- COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test program for concession card holders and low-income earners.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency:

- Actions taken in response to antisemitic online commentary and antisemitic complaints against practitioners;
- Number of staff with medical expertise, approaches to ensuring medical practitioners stay up to date with their training; and
- Breakdown of current care workforce numbers across Australia.

Cancer Australia

- Access to drugs and clinical trials underway in Australia for cancer drugs, registry of clinical trials in Australia;
- Access to dental care services following cancer treatments; and
- Implementation, action plans and partnerships under the Australian Cancer Plan.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand:

- Consultations on lab grown food; and
- BPA and PFAS in food-packaging.

National Rural Health Commissioner

- Rural maternity care in remote and Indigenous communities; and
- National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework.

DoHAC: Outcome 3 – Ageing and Aged Care

- Exposure draft for the new Aged Care Act;
- Recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety;
- Future Fit Program and Miles Morgan Australia contract;
- Commonwealth Home Support Program funding;
- Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessment wait times;
- Home Care Package wait lists;
- Budget for Support at Home Program; and
- Services that report care minutes.

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission:

- Consultancy firms undertaking aged care home inspections; and
- Star Ratings for residential aged care homes.

Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority:

- *(Released from the hearing without questions)*

Inspector-General of Aged Care:

- Review process of systemic issues in aged care;
- Operation of the agency and its independence; and
- New Aged Care Act.

DoHAC: Outcome 4 – Sport and Physical Activity

- Vacancies on the Australian Sports Foundation board;
- Preparations for hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic games, including infrastructure planning; and
- Applications for Play our Way grant and associated guidelines.

Australian Sports Commission

- Vacancies on Commission's board and recruitment process to fill these vacancies; and
- Australian Institute of Sport location.

Sport Integrity Australia

- Appointments to the Advisory Council; and
- Testing for athletes and anti-doping processes.

DoHAC: Outcome 1 – Health Policy, Access and Support

- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) Taskforce report;
- National Coronavirus Hotline and provision of information on COVID-19;
- Vaccine efficacy, assessment and review processes; and
- Increase in natural deaths.

Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency:

- (Released from hearing without questions)

National Blood Authority

- (Released from hearing without questions)

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

- (Released from hearing without questions)