

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH INSURANCE (DENTAL SERVICES) BILL 2012 [NO.2]

1 May 2012

Question no: 1

Topic: Provision of information to dental practitioners on the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme

Hansard Page: CA 33

Senator Di Natale asked:

I am interested in the approach that you used to communicate with dentists. Why did you decide to direct your communication through the databases held by the professional association – which, we have heard, may have missed as many as one in three dentists – as opposed to using the registration bodies, where you can be sure that every single dentist is reached?

Answer:

The Department of Health and Ageing's correspondence to dentists, dental specialists and general practitioners about the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) in October 2007 was based on mailing lists provided by Medicare Australia, the Australian Dental Association (ADA) (approximately 9,000 dentists and dental specialists) and the Australian Dental Prosthetists Association (ADPA) (approximately 1,000 dental prosthetists).

For privacy reasons, the Department would generally prefer to communicate with individuals through its own mailing lists.

However, in 2007 the ADA advised that its membership comprised 80% to 90% of dentists and dental specialists. The ADA therefore represented an efficient avenue to contact the majority of practising dentists and dental specialists.

Any dentists or dental specialists who were not on the Medicare Australia, ADA or ADPA mailing lists who may have first become aware of the Scheme upon receiving a referral from a GP was able to consult the Department's website, or call the Department of Health and Ageing or Medicare Australia to obtain further information.

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: INQUIRY INTO HEALTH INSURANCE (DENTAL SERVICES) BILL 2012 [NO.2]

1 May 2012

Question no: 2

Topic: Provision of information to dental practitioners on the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme

Hansard Page: CA 30

Senator Polley asked:

On the three occasions that legislation was put before the Senate to remove this legislation, was there, to your knowledge, any contact with, lobbying of, or discussions with your Department or the Department of Health and Ageing from the peak bodies.

Answer:

The Department of Health and Ageing met with the Australian Dental Association (ADA) on 6 March 2008. At this meeting the ADA was provided with an update on the Government's intention to close the CDDS, including advice on information to be provided to dentists, dental professionals and patients in the coming weeks.

The Government has attempted to close the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) on two occasions. The first attempt, a determination made on 13 March 2008 to discontinue the Scheme took effect at the end of March 2008, but was disallowed by the Senate on 19 June 2008. On 16 September 2008 the Government attempted to clear the way to make a fresh attempt to close the Scheme by a motion to rescind the disallowance. However this motion was defeated by the Senate and the Government was unable to make a new instrument.

The Government continued to make clear its intention to close the Scheme and the Department conveyed this on a number of occasions in writing to the peak bodies and individual dental and medical professionals during the period March to September 2008.