PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health Disability and Ageing

Select Committee on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances)

Inquiry into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS

10 June 2025

PDR Number: IQ25-000042

Community screening for PFAS in Wreck Bay

Spoken

Hansard page number: 40

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:
CHAIR: A GP who worked in Wreck Bay for some years suggested at the start that the whole community receive health screening for cancers, cholesterol and other disorders related to PFAS exposure, and they received this 10 years earlier than normally recommended. Do you have any idea what it would cost to provide this screening to a community of around 60 households?

Mr Bouwhuis: I don't know what that would cost off the top of my head, but I can take it on notice. There are obviously questions that come up in the committee about whether you would provide a medical benefit for blood testing. That would be a question for the Medical Services Advisory Committee—to advise whether that would be something that you would put on the Medicare schedule. But I can take on notice the specifics of your question and how much that would cost and come back to you.

Answer:

- Medicare does not currently fund population-wide screening services but rather funds diagnostic testing where there is a clear clinical indication. Accordingly, it does not provide general screening services for potential associations found for PFAS in some studies.
- However, there are a range of nationally available population-based cancer screening programs in Australia, including BreastScreen, the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and the National Cervical Screening Program.
- Tested individually, the approximate cost of pathology testing for some of the biological effects associated with PFAS exposure range between:
    - cholesterol and lipids: $30–$100
    - kidney function tests: $50–$150
    - thyroid function tests: $60–$120
    - an ultrasound scan for testicular cancer would typically cost around $211.