

Senate Select Committee on Autism

Public Hearing – 27 July 2020  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Senate Select Committee on Autism - Question 3

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000538

**Senator:** Jim Molan

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 33 - 34

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 August 2020

**Question:**

Senator MOLAN: The question I have is a very general question. It is to do with the MBS scheme and the relationship between the MBS item and the NDIS. My understanding is that, at a certain age—and I think it's 13—you can age out of the MBS scheme. Has this been addressed, or is it likely to be addressed? Could you also just give me a general understanding of the relationship.

Mr Broadhead: I should note that this is the province of the Department of Health rather than the Department of Social Services, so I might seek your permission to come back with more detail on certain advice, once I've had the chance to discuss it with them.

Senator MOLAN: Sure.

Mr Broadhead: These are measures that were introduced as part of the Helping Children with Autism program back in 2008. I think they are the ones you are referring to.

Senator MOLAN: Correct.

Mr Broadhead: I think this, again, speaks to the fact that all things disability don't belong to the NDIS. They belong to other parts of government programs and supports, and indeed to the wider community. These were introduced to provide support through the Medicare Benefits Scheme to reimburse part of the cost, if you like, to people receiving these supports. We have some tables in the submission that were provided by the Department of Health—it's a joint submission between us, Education and Health—which go to the use of these.

Senator MOLAN: Which paper, sorry?

Mr Broadhead: There was a joint submission from the Department of Social Services, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment and the Australian government Department of Health. It was all just one submission. I think you'll find, in that, that there is a description and some data about the use of those items. Attachment A sets out the use of those items under Medicare, including by state, I think, from memory. Other than that, you were talking about the interaction: I'd probably have to seek advice on that and come back to you with an answer on notice about the interaction between the two.

Senator MOLAN: That would be great, thanks. That is all from me. Thank you.

**Answer:**

The Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) initiative commenced on 1 July 2008, and provides Medicare rebates for assessment and treatment services for children and young people with autism or other pervasive developmental disorders. Eligibility requires that assessment, diagnosis and development of a treatment plan is completed before the child's thirteenth birthday. Provided this occurs, subsidised treatment services can be provided until the child reaches 15 years of age.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is not responsible for the diagnosis and clinical treatment of health conditions, or supports, which are clinical in nature and provided in the health system (Schedule 1, National Disability Insurance Scheme (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013).

The *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* does not require a clinical diagnosis to gain access, however a diagnosis and/or treatment plan are examples of evidence that may support an access request.

More information on is in the joint submission provided to the Senate Select Committee on Autism, including at Attachment A to the submission including tables on the use of the MBS items.