

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-138

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: MEDICAL DEVICES – MBS TELEHEALTH ITEMS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

Newly listed MBS Telehealth:

- a) How many MBS telehealth items are now funded by Medicare?
- b) Please breakdown the schedule fee for each service funded.
- c) What are the latest utilisation/billing results for these items?
- d) How much funding has been set aside for telehealth items over the forward estimates?
- e) Is the NBN required to access the telehealth items?
- f) Since the introduction of these telehealth items, can the department provide a breakdown of where these items are billed in terms of remoteness classification?

Answer:

- a) There are 11 Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items for specialist telehealth items which enable 55 existing consultation items to be billed as telehealth consultations and 23 MBS items for patient-end telehealth services.
- b) See Attachment A.
- c) Between 1 July 2011 and 11 February 2012, there were 9,180 telehealth services provided and \$1,251,597 paid in Medicare benefits for telehealth services (based on date of processing).
- d) Total funding of \$366 million was identified in the forward estimates (2011-12 to 2014-15) of the 2011-12 Budget for the telehealth MBS items. A further \$121 million was allocated for incentives to practitioners to deliver these telehealth services.
- e) Telehealth services do not necessarily require access to the National Broadband Network (NBN), however the NBN will enhance the capability of doctors and patients to utilise telehealth MBS items.
- f) Between 1 July 2011 and 11 February 2012, around 65 per cent of telehealth services were provided to regional areas, 8 per cent to remote and very remote areas, and 27 per cent to major cities/outer metropolitan areas (based on date of processing by RA classification).