

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-368

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: BETTER ACCESS PROGRAM

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Senator Wright asked:

- a) Perhaps you could give me that [figures for the last financial year] and then look at the projections for this calendar year, because the cuts are going to take effect as of 1 January next year.
- b) Would it also be possible to give that [figures] so there is a comparison of calendar years for the last calendar year?

Answer:

a) and b)

Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) related services for the Better Access program are paid for through 'Special appropriations - *Health Insurance Act 1973* - medical benefits'. The Better Access initiative is part of the MBS which is a demand driven program provided for under this special appropriation. As a demand driven program, all services that are clinically required will continue to be subsidised in line with the program's parameters.

The Department of Health and Ageing only publishes forward estimates for total MBS expenditure. The Department does not publish forward estimates for a subgroup of items or for specific programs such as Better Access.

The Department is able to provide actual expenditure for the Better Access MBS items by calendar year. Better Access includes MBS groups A20, M6, M7 and items 291, 293, 296, 297, 298. Cash expenditure figures in Table 1 include safety net payments.

Table 1: Better Access cash expenditure (Actual) for Calendar years 2008 to 2011

Calendar Year	Expenditure (cash)	Status
2008	\$210,539,706	Actual
2009	\$485,507,381	Actual
2010	\$560,658,284	Actual
2011	\$616,931,764	Actual