

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 13 & 15 February 2013

Question: E13-053

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Chemotherapy Drugs

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

- a) What guarantees are you giving patients that their chemotherapy services will not be interrupted as a direct result of the inability of community pharmacists and private hospitals to absorb the shortfall in funding caused by the Price Disclosure cuts to docetaxel on December 01?
- b) Did you know that there is a shortfall of \$1 million per week which is being absorbed by the pharmacists?
- c) When will we see a resolution?

Answer:

- a) Pharmacists have ethical responsibilities to the needs and safety of their patients, consistent with their professional practice standards. These standards are used by all pharmacy practice and registration bodies. If a pharmacist stops dispensing or threatens to stop dispensing chemotherapy medicines to a cancer patient, this could be a breach of professional practice standards and the matter would need to be considered by the Pharmacy Board of Australia.
- b) The Department of Health and Ageing is aware of this claim, but no evidence has been provided to the Department that would allow this claim to be substantiated. This claim has not been raised by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in direct discussions.
- c) The Department is holding ‘in good faith’ discussions with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. Good progress has been made and these discussions are continuing.