

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015, 25 February 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000245

OUTCOME: 6 - Private Health

Topic: Private Health Insurance Ombudsman

Type of Question: Hansard Page 77, 25 February 2015

Senator: McLucas, Jan

Question:

Senator McLUCAS: I also understand that there is currently a provision for the minister to intervene where the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman decides not to investigate a complaint. This has been, I understand, omitted from the bill transferring your powers to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Is that the case, and if so, why?

Mr McGregor: I would have to refer to the department.

Ms Faichney: I am sorry, I do not have that detail. I would have to take that one on notice.

Answer:

Following the transfer of functions from the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman, complaint management will be conducted by the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Bill reflects the current approach undertaken by the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the long standing statutory independence of the Office. This does not prevent anyone, including the Minister for Health, from raising concerns with the Commonwealth Ombudsman. This is consistent with the approach taken for other industry ombudsmen created under the Ombudsman Act.

To the Department's knowledge, Section 244-5 of the *Private Health Insurance Act 2007*, under which the minister can request the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman to undertake an investigation, has never been used.