

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000205

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** After Hours Services

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Griff, Stirling

**Question:**

According to Medicare statistics, South Australia is the heaviest user of item 597. In 2015-16, it had almost 11,750 urgent after hours home visits per 100,000 population, which is more than double the rate of Victoria and NSW, and six times the rate of NT.

- a) Can the department provide reasons for the large variations between states in the use of this item number?
- b) Is there any correlation between the use of after hours medical deputising services and marketing activities of the after hours service providers?
- c) Is SA “overusing” after hours services?

**Answer:**

- a) The medical deputising services providing urgent after-hours services operate primarily in major urban centres and the population distribution within each state and territory would have an impact on utilisation rates on a per capita basis.
- b) The continuing and widespread marketing of their services by medical deputising services indicates that these activities provide a substantial return on investment in terms of service numbers.
- c) There is no obvious explanation as to why one state or territory should have higher demand than others for genuinely urgent after-hours services.