

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000407

OUTCOME: 2 - Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Life Saving Drugs Program

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

Why have the expert clinical committees that work as part of the LSDP been sacked before the LSDP review has even started?

Answer:

Consistent with the Australian Government's deregulation agenda, from 1 May 2014 the administration processes of the Life Saving Drugs Programme (LSDP) have been streamlined. Ceasing the Disease Advisory Committees (DAC) will reduce the need for all applications to go through a committee process.

The new arrangements parallel well established processes with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) complex authority prescribing. Treating physicians routinely use their clinical knowledge and experience to make decisions about which PBS medicines are most appropriate to treat their patients' medical conditions, so these changes to the LSDP application process will give these medical professionals similar autonomy to assess and access the most appropriate treatment for individual patients.

The decision to cease the role of the DAC members has also served to remove any perceived or actual conflict of interest posed through their committee membership, thus allowing the small group of experts who work in this area to participate fully in the post-market review of the LSDP and to advocate on behalf of their patients.

The LSDP review does not affect patients who are currently treated through the LSDP - they will continue to receive access to treatment. New patients may continue to apply for access to treatment and applications for new medicines seeking listing will continue to be considered throughout the review period.