Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000502

OUTCOME: 7 - Health Infrastructure, Regulation, Safety and Quality

Topic: eHealth Implementation Issues

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question:

a) What is the current status of the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) given the recent publicised departure of a number of medical professionals from the body?

b)Are there any plans to disband the NEHTA and develop a new body?

c)Can you please detail the 'opt out' option or when you expect this information will be released?

d)Can you advise how the 'opt out' version of eHealth was adopted?

e)Do you have an approximate date as to when the 'opt out' eHealth system will be rolled out across the industry?

f)Are there similar cases of an 'opt out' option in Australia that have been successful that you can direct us to?

g)Have you highlighted any potential set-backs of the roll out to regional and country Australia?

h)Have you obtained any information as to how the roll out of eHealth will affect sustainability?

Answer:

a)   The National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) continues to deliver key national eHealth infrastructure, such as the Healthcare Identifiers Service and eHealth specifications and standards. As eHealth in Australia has matured, NEHTA's role has shifted from focussing on designing and building systems to implementing and supporting the adoption of eHealth.

b)   The Government has extended funding for NEHTA for twelve months while it considers the recommendations of the personally controlled electronic health record (PCEHR) review.

c)   Approaches to the implementation of 'opt-out' for consumers will be considered as part of the consultation process discussed above.

d)   Opt-out for the PCEHR has not been adopted.

e)   The Government will consider timeframes for implementation when it further considers the recommendations of the PCEHR Review.

f)   Internationally there are a large number of successful opt-out shared Electronic Health Record systems. These typically have opt-out rates of around one per cent.

g)   The Department of Health is undertaking consultations with healthcare providers, consumers and the ICT industry to obtain stakeholder views on the PCEHR Review recommendations, and how they might be implemented. The consultation process will include discussions with people and providers in rural and regional Australia. This will include consultation with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine. It is expected that consultation will provide further information on issues that exist in regional and country Australia.

The Department expects that any further implementation of the PCEHR would have a positive impact on health outcomes, particularly for people living in regional and remote Australia.

h)   Deloitte has estimated that proper implementation of an eHealth Record could deliver $11.5 billion of benefits over 15 years. The 2008 National E-Health Strategy states that "implementation of a national E-Health strategy will be a safer and more sustainable health system that is suitably equipped to respond to emerging health sector cost and demand pressures." This would be achieved through:
- improving the quality and safety of the Australian health system;
- support a more accessible and equitable health system; and
- improving system efficiency.