

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000544

OUTCOME: 4 - Individual Health Benefits

Topic: MBS item 55850

Type of Question: Hansard Page 50, 29 May 2017

Senator: Griff, Stirling

Question:

Senator GRIFF: What is interesting is that the RANZCR, the college of radiologists, has warned about the abuse of point-of-care musculoskeletal ultrasound and has provided a position paper on it. I am not sure if you or your department have seen this. I would be interested to know if the department is taking, or plans to take, any preventive action or any actual action on this, or is looking at this position of the RANZCR. I know it is a difficult one that not everyone here is going to be aware of, but a 56-fold increase is quite substantial. I am aware of specialists who state that this particular procedure has effectively bought them their Porsche because quite simply they can effectively just do the injection, do a very quick ultrasound and claim a substantial amount.

Mr Bowles: Senator, it would be best for us to take the specifics of that one on notice.

Senator GRIFF: If you could take that on notice, that would be—

Mr Bowles: It would be likely that that would come up in the context of our MBS review group, anyhow, if it would spark those sorts of numbers. We may not have even got to that particular area yet, but we will take that on notice.

Senator GRIFF: It is obviously a key area.

Mr Stuart: Senator, I am advised that there has been thought, in the context of both the MBS review and MSAC to date, but the specifics of it are not available to us right now.

Mr Bowles: We will take it on notice.

Answer:

The Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review is an independent, clinician-led process with strategic oversight by a Taskforce comprising of senior clinicians, health policy academics and a consumer representative. To undertake a detailed review of individual MBS items, the Taskforce has established clinical committees with expertise in specific areas of clinical practice. The Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Committee (DICC) has commenced a review of the items listed in the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table of the MBS, including Item 55850, but this is not yet ready for publication. Information about the progress of the MBS Review, and reports available for public consultation, can be found online at www.health.gov.au, using the search term 'Medicare Benefits Schedule Review'.