

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000575

OUTCOME: 4 - Individual Health Benefits

Topic: Safety Net

Type of Question: Hansard Page 86, 29 May 2017

Senator: Griff, Stirling

Question:

Ms Shakespeare: The policy has been developed based on costs for a household—

Senator GRIFF: Have you done any modelling to look at any other options?

Ms Shakespeare: We have had a look at other options, and there are quite a lot of issues around the government's capacity to track who is single and who is in a family. There are issues—

Senator GRIFF: Is that not a fairly easy thing to sort out through, say, Centrelink?

Ms Shakespeare: No. I think that would require officers at the Department of Human Services to get access to information about someone's marital status, and that is not currently collected there. There are some practical issues about the capacity to have differential co-payments and the costs to the administration of the PBS.

Senator GRIFF: What did your modelling show?

Ms Shakespeare: It was done at the Department of Human Services. We may have had access to it. I do not have that here with me.

Senator GRIFF: Could we see that?

Ms Shakespeare: How about we take on notice what we looked at and what issues were raised?

Answer:

The Department of Health has undertaken aggregated and de-identified analysis from time to time on the number of patients who reach the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net and how many prescriptions those patients use. However, the Department has not been able to incorporate the family circumstances of patients into this analysis, so the analysis has been incomplete. Note that all Australians eligible for Medicare are entitled to subsidised medicines through the PBS.

The Department continues to work with the Department of Human Services on how to effectively undertake analysis of safety net benefits and costs to patients.