

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 & 30 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000794

OUTCOME: 4 - Individual Health Benefits

Topic: MBS Statistics

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Watt, Murray

Question:

- a) Have out of pocket costs for GP visits increased in regional, remote and very remote areas in the March quarter?
- b) What has been the change from the previous quarter for each?

Answer:

As seen in Table 1, out-of-pocket costs for GP visits have a clear cyclical pattern over the year, with the highest average out-of-pocket costs in the March quarter and the lowest in the December quarter each year. This is the result of the Medicare Safety Net arrangements which operate on a calendar year basis.

As an individual or family reaches a Medicare Safety Net threshold, they receive a higher Medicare benefit for all eligible services for the remainder of the calendar year. The impact of the Medicare Safety Net payments on reducing out-of-pocket costs increases as more individuals or families reach the Medicare Safety Net thresholds as the year progresses.

For this reason, it is essential to compare quarterly changes in the out-pocket costs with the same quarter in the previous year.

More information on key Medicare safety net arrangements is available at

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/EMSN-overview-key-medicare-safety-net-arrangements>

Table 1: Average Out-of-Pocket per Service for Out of Hospital Patient Billed Services: Total Non-Referred Attendances (Excl Practice Nurse Items) Quarterly 2012 to 2016

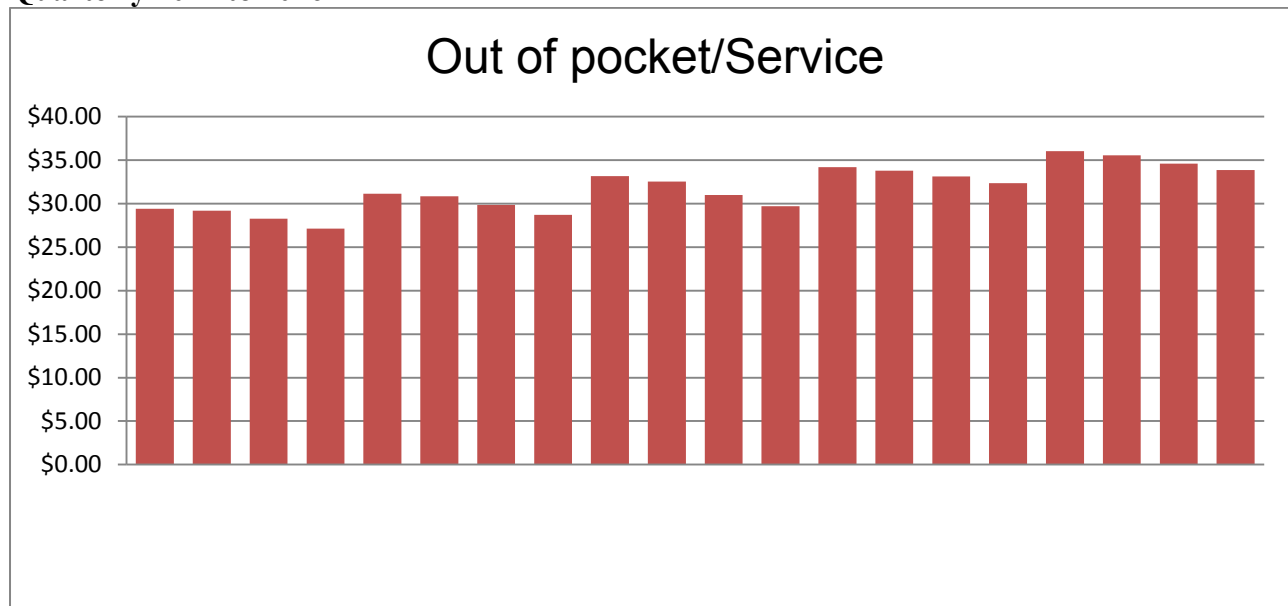


Table 2: Average Patient Contribution (\$) per Service for Out of Hospital Patient Billed Services: Total Non-Referred Attendances (Excl Practice Nurse Items) March Quarter 2017 compared to March Quarter 2016

	Mar Qtr 2017	Mar Qtr 2016	\$ Increase	% Increase
Major Cities	39.06	37.16	1.90	5.1%
Inner Regional	34.45	32.96	1.49	4.5%
Outer Regional	35.36	34.00	1.36	4.0%
Remote	38.93	37.54	1.39	3.7%
Very Remote	40.11	38.90	1.21	3.1%
Australia	37.76	36.02	1.74	4.8%

Source: Published Medicare Statistics

<http://health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Quarterly-Medicare-Statistics>

Tab 1.5d Patient OoP Remote Qtrly