

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 & 30 May 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-001032

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** After Hours GP Services

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Di Natale, Richard

**Question:**

If the government limits the types of doctors who can deliver these services what percentage reduction in access to this service will we see?

**Answer:**

There are a range of Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) items for after-hours care, including MBS items for non-urgent after hours attendances provided at consulting rooms, residential aged care facilities (RACF) and attendances at a place other than a consulting room or RACF (eg home visits). In addition, there are also MBS items for urgent after-hours attendances (MBS items 597-600) which can be claimed for an urgent after-hours attendance at a person's home, RACF or consulting room if the doctor is required to return, and specially open, the consulting rooms for the attendance. Within this structure there are differing levels of MBS rebates depending on the qualifications of the practitioner, with General Practitioners or those participating in a recognised training programme attracting a higher rate of reimbursement.

Support for after-hours care through the MBS is an important component of the primary healthcare system, and both the MBS items and their use needs to be appropriate and evidence-based. The MBS Review Taskforce will ultimately make its recommendation on the basis of the right care being provided by the right doctor in the right place.

The Taskforce released its preliminary report: *Urgent after-hours primary care services funded through the MBS* for public consultation on 7 June 2017. Following the completion of the consultation period (closing 21 July 2017) the MBS Review Taskforce will consider the feedback received before making its final recommendations to the Minister for Health.