

## Senate Community Affairs Committee

### ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### HEALTH PORTFOLIO

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

Ref No: SQ17-001056

**OUTCOME:** 4 - Individual Health Benefits

**Topic:** Health on Ice

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

**Senator:** Xenophon, Nick

**Question:**

Referencing QON SQ17-000499 from February 2017 Estimates:

- a) What is/was the cost of implementing the new item numbers?
- b) Does this amount come out of the \$13m estimated MBS costs?
- c) Are only Addiction Medicine Specialist allowed to use these new items?
- d) If so, how does the Department ensure this is the case and why can't the Department say how many specialists are using these items?
- e) How many addiction medicine specialists are registered?

**Answer:**

- a) The Department of Human Services (DHS) was responsible for implementation of the new items as part of the Government's response to the recommendations of the National Ice Taskforce. The DHS costs associated with this measure were \$0.2 million in 2016-17 and are published in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook document available at: <http://budget.gov.au/2015-16/content/myefo/html/index.htm>
- b) As provided in Question on Notice SQ17-000499, the \$13 million was the estimated Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) costs over the forward years and excludes implementation costs.
- c) Yes, the *Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulation* restricts access to only addiction medicine specialists who have registered as specialists for the purposes of Medicare.
- d) The DHS administers these items and are responsible for ensuring use of the items is in line with the legislation. As provided in Question on Notice SQ17-000499, undertaking a detailed analysis of all billing behaviour by addiction medicine specialists would require a significant diversion of resources from other departmental operations.
- e) Data on the number of practitioners in each profession is published on the Medical Board of Australia's website at [www.medicalboard.gov.au/News/Statistics.aspx](http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/News/Statistics.aspx). As at the latest reporting period of 1 October 2016 – 31 December 2016, 167 addiction medicine specialists were registered in Australia. It is important to note that only a proportion of services provided by these specialists would be billed to the MBS as many addiction medicine services are delivered in public hospital outpatient settings.