

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-095

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: POSITRON EMISSION TOMOGRAPHY (PET) 'WALK IN SERVICES

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Senator Boyce asked:

- a) Is the Department aware of the offer of Queensland X-Ray to provide a PET scanner in an already constructed facility in Townsville, which would be in operation within six months of being ordered as opposed to the Government promised facility that would only be ready to use by 2014?
- b) Is the Department aware that this offer by Queensland X-Ray would offer bulk billing and that they would be responsible for all ongoing costs, including its replacement at the end of its serviceable life (3-5 years)? Is the Department also aware that taking up this offer it would only cost the Federal Government \$1.5 million by a way of a grant to the applicant for half the capital costs of the first PET scanner?
- c) If the Department is not aware of this offer and its detail, why not?
- d) If the Department is aware of this offer why wouldn't it take the offer up, given the manifest cost savings to the taxpayer?
- e) Could the Department provide the list of all the criteria used by the HHF in assessing the Queensland X-Ray proposal and all the reasons why the Department claims it didn't meet those criteria?
- f) Is it correct that 90% of PET scans are done on a "walk in, walk out" basis?

Answer:

- a) During the 2010 Federal election the Coalition committed \$2.5 million towards the cost of Positron Emission Tomography (PET) machine at the Townsville Mater Private Hospital to be operated by Queensland X-Ray.
- b) From media reports, the Department is aware that Queensland X-Ray has offered to bulk-bill patients for PET services. It is not aware of any other funding proposals made by Queensland X-Ray.
- c) The Department has not received a proposal from Queensland X-Ray or the Townsville Mater Private Hospital for funding to install an additional machine in Townsville.
- d) The Department is implementing this Government's commitment of establishing a Regional Cancer Centre in Townsville, which includes funding for a PET machine, at Townsville (public) Hospital.

- e) Queensland X-Ray has not applied for funding under the HHF.
- f) To be eligible to claim Medicare Benefits for a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) service, the PET scan must be provided following referral from a recognised specialist or consultant physician and be provided at an eligible PET facility. In 2009-10, there were 28,211 Medicare PET services. The Department assumes that the meaning of “walk-in, walk-out basis” refers to out-patient services where a Medicare benefit is claimed. The Department does not have access to data other than where a Medicare benefit has been paid. Medicare benefits are not paid for public hospital in-patient services and other non-Medicare rebateable services. Therefore, the Department cannot confirm this 90 per cent figure.