

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-118

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: NATIONAL PRESCRIBING SERVICE

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Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) were given extra money. Could you provide more detail in relation to what they are doing.

Answer:

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) was provided with \$10.32 million over four years in the 2009-10 Budget to promote evidence-based requests for diagnostic imaging and pathology services. During the first nine months of the contract, the NPS undertook a scoping exercise to identify and establish contacts with stakeholders and research the issues relevant to improving requesting of diagnostic services.

During this period, the NPS:

- established an expert advisory group;
- collected and analysed baseline data;
- held meetings and workshops with key stakeholders including general practitioners and consumers; and
- conducted a review of existing evidence for proven interventions for changing diagnostic referral patterns.

During 2010-11 the NPS is conducting a program in general practice to improve the quality of imaging referrals that will lead to more appropriate and lower use of CT scans and back x-ray in the management of back pain, and is developing a program to improve the quality of referrals for vitamin D testing.