

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-270

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: MEDICARE BENEFITS SCHEDULE - NEW AND REVISED LISTINGS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Revisions of existing items to include new services and the addition of new items will result in savings of \$6.8 million over five years. Under a 2009-10 Budget measure the Department is developing the MBS Quality Framework for evaluating and reviewing MBS services. The Department has released discussion papers on how the framework arrangements could work, and taken submissions, but the framework has not been finalised. In the meantime, services are being reviewed under the framework and applications are being taken, but the Department has not convened any of the advisory committees. There is very little information available about the services being assessed under the framework and consultation with stakeholders has been limited to making submissions to discussion papers.

- a) Is this framework in place?
- b) Have the advisory committees been appointed, and if so has the membership been announced?
- c) How many applications have been made to it and what services are they for?
- d) Where are those applications up to in the process?
- e) Will you be making details of the progress of applications publicly available? If so, when?

Answer:

- a) The MBS Quality Framework incorporates three distinct phases: design, testing and implementation. The proposed processes for each of the new listings, reviews and fee setting components have been developed and are currently being tested. The MBS Quality Framework initiative was established as a two-year terminating program, with outcomes and continuation, as well as proposed changes to the MBS resulting from its processes, to be considered as New Policy Proposals in the 2011-12 Budget. There is no estimate of savings from the MBS Quality Framework.
- b) The proposed MBS Quality Framework committees have not been appointed. It is envisaged that an appropriate advisory structure will be in place by early 2011.

- c) Two full applications have been received. One is from the Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA) seeking two new consultation items that involve joint injections, which was submitted on 21 April 2010. The second is from the Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM), which was submitted on 1 November 2010, seeking four new items for the development and the review of treatment and management plans for palliative patients. In addition, a number of other proposals have been submitted but have not reached the full application stage.
- d) The ARA application is under active assessment. The draft assessment protocol was available on the Medical Benefits Reviews Task Group (MBRTG) website for public comment from 25 October 2010 to 5 November 2010. Stakeholders were notified about this. The detailed assessment will commence once the assessment protocol is finalised on 12 November 2010. If the evidence results in a positive funding recommendation then it is expected that the outcome will be considered by Government in the 2011-12 Budget process. Full assessment of the ANZSPM application will commence shortly.
- e) Information about applications accepted for assessment will be publicly available on the department's MBRTG website. Interested parties will be able to track the progress of assessments.