

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-271

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: PATHOLOGY COLLECTION CENTRES

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) What has been the average annual growth rate in pathology Medicare services and benefits?
- b) How many collection centres were there prior to 1 July 2010?
- c) How many additional collection centres have been approved since 1 July 2010?
- d) Is the Department aware of any information or advice that the growth in collection centres will lead to higher than average growth in pathology expenditure and services?
- e) What is the cause attributed to this higher than average predicted growth?
- f) Does the Department or Medicare collect or have access to information on rental costs and space rented by collection centres?
- g) If so, what is the average cost per square metre prior to 1 July 2010?
- h) What is the average cost per square metre after 1 July 2010.

Answer

- a) The annual average growth rate for Medicare pathology services for the last three financial years has been:

	Services	Benefits
2007-08	8.3%	6.8%
2008-09	4.6%	5.0%
2009-10	1.4%	0.0%

- b) According to data supplied to the Department by Medicare Australia, prior to 1 July 2010 there were 2,656 approved collection centres.
- c) According to data supplied to the Department by Medicare Australia, between 1 July 2010 and 25 October 2010 there have been 925 new collection centres approved.
- d) The Government is monitoring the impact of these measures. There is no evidence that the number of collection centres has led to an increase in pathology services. There are laws preventing both the requesting and the provision of unnecessary pathology tests. Medicare Australia is responsible for monitoring compliance with these laws.

- e) There has not been a higher than average predicted growth.
- f) The Department of Health and Ageing does not collect this information. Making an application for a new collection centre approval includes providing information on the annual rent and floor space for the proposed site. The applications containing this information are submitted to Medicare Australia.

g and h)

The Department of Health and Ageing does not hold this information.