

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-309

OUTCOME 5: Primary Care

Topic: GP SUPER CLINICS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) How many of these clinics bulk bill for all services?
- b) How many bulk bill for some services and what are those services and patient segments?
- c) Is this considered a strong outcome from "strong encouragement" to bulk bill?
- d) How many services have been billed to Medicare at each super clinic?
- e) How many of the super clinics bulk bill concession cardholders and children under the age of sixteen years?
- f) Do any of the super clinics bulk bill for all patients?
- g) If so, which locations?
- h) Do any of the contracts provide an obligation to bulk bill?

Answer:

a) and b) Of the eight GP Super Clinics currently in operation, the operators have advised that their bulk billing arrangements are as follows:

- Ballan (VIC)  
The majority of services are free or bulk billed. For those health professionals who charge a fee, discounts are available for healthcare card concession holders. Billing arrangements are as follows:
  - Physiotherapists - bulk bill for Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) items, Home and Community Care (HACC) fee for Health care holders, no fee for Rural Primary Health Program (RPHS) health promotion and private fees for others.
  - Podiatrist - HACC fee for Health care holders and private fees for others.
  - Psychologists - no fees under More Allied Health Service program and private fees for ECP items.
  - Welfare worker and Community Health Nurse - no fee under the RPHS program.
  - Occupational Physician - fees are covered by insurance/work cover.
  - Diabetes educator, Dietician, and Continence Nurse - HACC fee.
  - Pathology - a combination of bulk-billing and private.
  - Optometrist and Australian Hearing - bulk billed.
  - Pathology - a combination of bulk billing and private
  - Occupational therapy - no charge under RPHS and HACC program.

- District Nursing - HACC fee and brokerage at private fees (the GP Super Clinic provides, through a brokered arrangement with the local hospital, district nursing services; there is no fee to the patient).
  - Dental - Private fees, emergency and teen vouchers, EPC items.
- Devonport (TAS)  
The Clinic provides a combination of private billing, Department of Veterans Affairs billing and Medicare bulk billing. All chronic disease management, enhanced primary care and preventative visits are bulk billed, along with follow-up visits relating to the initial consultation. There are also substantial reductions for Health Care card holders and aged or disability pensioners.
  - Geelong (VIC)  
Mix of bulk billing for pensioners and health card holds and private billing at the doctor's discretion. When referred through a GP for an allied health care plan, a patient is eligible for five free visits to allied health (includes physiotherapy, dietician, podiatry, diabetes educator and soon to include psychology, lactation consultant and midwife).
  - Ipswich (QLD)  
Concession card holders, children under 16 and senior citizens (over 65) are bulk billed.
  - Modbury (SA)  
Current services are provided at no cost to patients.
  - Palmerston (NT)  
Bulk billing of EPC and Chronic Disease Management items and for pensioners, health care concession card holders, children under 16years. Urgent Care After Hours Service is free (fully funded by NT Government).
  - Port Stephens (NSW)  
Bulk billing is offered to all permanent residents of Port Stephens and concession card holders, all children under 16 years, Veterans, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Allied Health Professionals bulk bill patients who have been referred to them following a GP Enhanced Primary Care assessment.
  - Strathpine (QLD)  
All Medicare rebate-able services are fully bulk billed including, GP, allied health and nurse services, x-ray, pathology, psychology, podiatry, physiotherapy, dietetic, and exercise physiology.
- c) The availability of bulk billed services to groups who can least afford these services is a good outcome.
- d) This information is confidential under the secrecy provisions (Section 130) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* as it would provide activity and billing information for individual medical practices.
- e) Refer to a and b).
- f) Refer to a).
- g) Refer to a).
- h) No.