

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-327

OUTCOME 10: Health System Capacity and Quality

Topic: ALBURY WODONGA CANCER CENTRE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) What needs criteria is applied by DoHA to determine which rural areas receive funding for cancer treatment services?
- b) As suggested by the Minister, has DoHA reviewed Albury-Wodonga's need for cancer services as promised? If a cancer treatment is warranted, through what funding source, and when, will the centre be established?
- c) Has the Minister sought DoHA briefings from her department on cancer services options for Albury-Wodonga as promised in a media report (The Border Mail, 9 April 2010) and if so what are the outcomes of those briefings?

Answer:

- a) The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), provides funding via a Medicare rebate for a range of cancer treatment services. The MBS does not discriminate between geographic locations.

DoHA, through the second round of the Health and Hospitals Fund (HHF), has also provided capital funding for regional cancer centres and associated accommodation facilities. All applications under round two were assessed against the established HHF evaluation criteria with regard to the Regional Cancer Centres (RCCs) Guiding Principles. These criteria are attached and were developed specifically for the Regional Cancer Centre HHF round, in consultation with experts and the community.

- b) As required under the *Nation-building Funds Act 2008* (the Act), the Government referred the funding application for a regional cancer centre at Albury-Wodonga to the independent HHF Advisory Board for assessment against the evaluation criteria determined under the Act. The Board also had regard to the RCCs Guiding Principles.

Consistent with the statutory requirements, the Government considered for funding only those applications assessed by the board as satisfying the evaluation criteria. The Albury-Wodonga RCC application was assessed by the Board as not meeting the HHF evaluation criteria. Officials from DoHA met with representatives of the consortium involved in this application on 3 May 2010 and provided feedback to inform any future application to the HHF.

- c) The Minister was briefed on the Board's assessment of the Albury-Wodonga RCC application and wrote to the applicant on 8 April 2010 advising them of the outcome of the application process, and providing contact details in DoHA should the applicant wish to obtain detailed feedback. As stated, representatives of the consortium involved with this application sought feedback and have met with Departmental representatives. The Albury-Wodonga applicants have been encouraged to reapply during the new regional priority round of the HHF, which closes on 3 December 2010.