

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES - 20 OCTOBER 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Medicare online claiming and staffing in Medicare offices

Question reference number: HSW 3

Senator: Williams

Type of question: Written

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Number of pages: 1

Question:

Several years ago, with the development of Electronic claiming into the Medicare Network, where customers and providers could claim their rebates electronically, there were a number of forecasts presented which indicated that the take up rate of that service option has not come to fruition. As a result of those forecasts, many call centre and specialist positions within the Medicare Network were downgraded or abolished and the work load from these areas re-distributed to the front line service. This was done in anticipation of a reduced work load to front line staff as on-line services developed. This has left the front line areas under-resourced, the Australian public under serviced and created significant logistical issues internally for the old Medicare Australia, and now the new Department of Human Services.

Were the forecasts produced indicating the take up rate of electronic claiming:

- a) false, not representative of the truth; or
- b) used as a tool to push through reduced running costs by removing roles and positions from key business areas of the Medicare network?
- c) In light of the slow take up rate of Electronic claiming, what funding strategies have you put in place to ensure that the front line services are adequately staffed and funded to take on telephony, specialist back loaded work and other duties that were previously carried out by back office staff?

Answer:

- a) No.
- b) No.
- c) Front line services are adequately staffed. Incoming processing work is tracked and distributed to individual offices with capacity to process work based on skill matches. Each office's capacity is analysed and available staffing is assigned to meet customer demand.