

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-145

OUTCOME 13: Acute Care

Topic: MAREEBA HOSPITAL

Hansard Page: CA 61-63

Senator Macdonald asked:

- a) Can someone give me a three-line description of what the COAG s 19(2) exemptions are and how they work?
- b) What is the Commonwealth Medicare arrangement?
- c) Does the money go to where the patient directs?
- d) And that would be to the doctor or to the hospital or to doctor's employer?
- e) What happens in Queensland?
- f) What happens in the case of Mareeba hospital?
- g) Is it a fact that money is owed by Queensland Health to Mareeba Hospital.
- h) How I can ensure that the people in the Northern Atherton Tableland get these additional services Mareeba Hospital wisely and credibly engaged.

Answer:

- a) COAG s 19(2) exemptions allow eligible state remunerated primary health care services provided by approved sites in a rural or remote area with a workforce shortage and a population of less than 7,000 to be claimed against the Medical Benefits Schedule.
- b) Medicare benefits are paid to eligible patients for services provided by eligible health care professionals.
- c) It is a condition that Medicare benefits claimed through a COAG s 19(2) exemption are bulk-billed. Where an eligible health care professional chooses to bulk-bill, the patient 'assigns' their right to Medicare benefits to the health professional, as full payment for the medical service received.

- d) Medicare benefits claimed through a COAG s 19(2) exemption must ultimately be used to enhance primary care services in accordance with a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth and the participating state or territory, and Implementation Plans approved by the Commonwealth at sites operating under the Memorandum of Understanding.
- e) In Queensland, Medicare benefits claimed through a COAG s 19(2) exemption must be used to enhance primary care services in accordance with the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth and Queensland and a site's Implementation Plan.
- f) Medicare benefits generated by the COAG s 19(2) exemption at the Mareeba Hospital are held by the Cairns and Hinterland Health Service District before being redirected to the site to be used to enhance primary care services in accordance with the site's Implementation Plan.
- g) Medicare benefits generated by the COAG s 19(2) exemption at the Mareeba Hospital are currently held by the Cairns and Hinterland Health Service District. Queensland Health acknowledges the requirement that all Medicare benefits generated by the COAG s19(2) exemption at the Mareeba Hospital need to be used to improve access to primary care services in the community of Mareeba.
- h) Queensland Health have confirmed that arrangements have been agreed between the Cairns and Hinterland Health Service District and the Mareeba COAG s 19(2) Governance Committee to ensure that all Medicare benefits revenue previously accrued by Mareeba Hospital under the COAG s 19(2) exemption and currently held by the Cairns Health Service District will be used to enhance local services. A plan has been developed to employ clinical staff funded from this source supplemented by ongoing Medicare benefits revenue received by the hospital.