

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19-21 October 2011

Question: E11-251

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: MSAC PROCESS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Xenophon asked:

How long does the MSAC process usually take, from first application until the final assessment (HTA review estimated 75 weeks?)

Answer:

New Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) processes introduced from 1 January 2011 mean that there are 2 pathways for MSAC assessments, each with different timeframes. If deemed eligible for assessment, all applications are initially considered by MSAC's Protocol Advisory Sub-Committee (PASC), which defines the type of evidence that needs to be submitted, and the way in which this evidence needs to be presented. PASC does this by establishing a decision analytic protocol through a process informed by public consultation and expert advice.

Following this protocol establishment stage, the applicant can elect either to provide a submission based assessment (in which the applicant prepares their own report assessing the evidence, in accordance with the protocol established by PASC), or to have an assessment report prepared by a health technology assessment group contracted by the Department. The assessment report is then considered by MSAC's Evaluation Sub-Committee prior to consideration by MSAC itself.

Although timeframes can vary depending on when applicants submit evidence in relation to the committee meeting dates (which are published), the expected overall timeframe for a full assessment is 52-58 weeks where the applicant chooses to provide a submission based assessment report, and 60-78 weeks where the applicant prefers a contracted assessment.

The submission-based assessment timeframe is shorter because most applicants have all the relevant evidence already available (and only need to assemble the evidence and prepare an economic evaluation in accordance with the protocol), whereas contracted assessments take longer because of the need for the assessment group to conduct literature searches to find relevant evidence. Both of these timeframes may be shorter where PASC determines that a full assessment is not required (such as for a re-submission of a previous application where MSAC identified specific additional evidence that is required, or where a previously established protocol is directly applicable to the assessment).

Deadlines for receipt of papers to be considered at meetings of MSAC and its sub-committees are publicly available, allowing applicants to plan the timing of their application.