Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-474

OUTCOME 10: Health System Capacity and Quality

Topic: EHEALTH – AMA AND LACK OF SUPPORT

Written Questions on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

a) The AMA has made it very clear they cannot support the proposed system as it does not, in their view, improve on what we have now and that, as presently designed, could create serious risks to patient health. Surely this must be of great concern to NEHTA when a body such as the AMA believes this to be the case, so how does NEHTA respond to such concerns?

b) How can NEHTA possible answers such concerns when so many of the key technical standards of the PCEHR have not been completed or adequately tested?

Answer:

a) The Department of Health and Ageing and the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) have ongoing consultation with Australian Medical Association to ensure that the feedback of their members is taken into account in the development of the personally controlled electronic health records (PCEHR) system.

b) To support the PCEHR system 23 technical standards are required. Four are complete and have been fully tested, the remainder will be completed and tested by the end of December 2011. Review processes for the standards include 'tiger teams' which bring together clinicians, software developers, standards representatives and informaticians to review and improve the specifications.

Each stage of the development process for the PCEHR technical specifications require clinical governance and safety processes to be followed. NEHTA's Clinical Safety Unit (CSU) is fully embedded into all areas of NEHTA's product development and oversees clinical governance at NEHTA. The CSU is supplemented through NEHTA's Clinical Leads.

The CSU addresses safety by working across the work programs in NEHTA to provide certainty to medical software developers, end-users and policy makers. It is a legitimate expectation of Vendors that products developed by NEHTA are safe and have Clinical Utility.

Any clinical safety findings as a result of reviews of specifications and standards are included in the overall review outcomes and mitigations are recommended for inclusion as part of any proposed drafting changes in the specifications, or in the form of implementation guidance to mitigate the risks.