

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2014-15 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 3 - Ageing

Question No: 575

Topic: Medical Aids

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

1. With the Commonwealth taking on responsibility for all aged care services, is there a plan in place or being developed for providing a primary Commonwealth Assistive Technology funding program for eligible people 65 and over?
2. If so, what is this plan?
3. If not, why isn't a plan in place or being developed?

Answer:

Commonwealth aged care programmes are not designed to replace existing state managed schemes which provide medical aids and equipment, however the aged care system can support consumers to access aids and equipment in a number of ways:

- The Home Care Packages Programme, while not intended to be an aids and equipment scheme, can provide aids and equipment for a consumer where this is identified in their care plan and the items can be provided within the resources of the Package.
- The Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), which from July 2015 will combine the Commonwealth HACC Programme, the National Respite for Carers Programme, the Day Therapy Centres Program and the Assistance with Care and Housing for Aged Programme, is being designed to deliver support – in the form of either low intensity ongoing services or higher intensity services on a short term or episodic basis – to older Australians living in the community and their carers. A discussion paper that proposed a set of key directions for the new programme was released in May 2014 for public feedback. The paper acknowledged that funds currently allocated to goods and equipment services under the Commonwealth HACC Programme formed a very small proportion of government funds for goods and equipment compared with state and territory programs, but proposed that services funded under the CHSP could play a key role in providing information for clients about assistive technology, as well as limited assistance with the purchase or hire of equipment where the client is unable to purchase the equipment independently. Feedback on the Discussion Paper closed in June 2014 and the Government used submissions received to refine the design of the CHSP.
- On 18 December 2014, Minister Fifield confirmed the key directions for the CHSP and advised that the bulk of existing services will continue to be funded under the CHSP until 30 June 2017. Further information about the programme will be available in the draft Programme Manual, which is expected to be available for comment on www.dss.gov.au/chsp shortly. This will include information regarding Assistive Technology and the role it will play in CHSP.

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People with disability who have accessed the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) before they turn 65 will have reasonable and necessary supports funded by the scheme which may include aids and equipment.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to continuity of support to ensure no one is disadvantaged by the roll-out of the scheme. This will include people who are currently receiving specialist disability services and who are aged 65 and over when the scheme is implemented in their area.