

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

31 May – 2 June 2011

Question No: BET 218

Topic: Means Test Private Health Insurance

Hansard Page: 73

Senator Cormann asked:

Senator CORMANN: Okay, so 2009-10 and since then we have had the 2010-11 budget and this is now the 2011-12 budget, so there are two years in between. We have had changes in membership profile and changes in rates, yet nowhere can we identify a figure in the budget, and you are not able to tell me, by the sounds of it, for what the revised figure will be.

Mr M Robinson: I understand that the policy was originally announced in the 2009 budget, which is where the original budget measure appeared. My understanding is that as a result of the legislation not being passed in 2009-10 the government is planning to reintroduce the policy. As a result there has been, obviously, delay in the start date of the policy.

Senator CORMANN: So is it currently not policy as far as the budget is concerned? It has not been reconfirmed as policy right now?

Mr M Robinson: My understanding is that the government has made numerous public statements about its intention to reintroduce the policy and that it is still part of its current policy.

Senator CORMANN: I understand. But what is the budget treatment of the government's statements that it intends to reintroduce the legislation?

Mr M Robinson: The budget treatment would be that the savings from the policy with a revised start date would be in the budget.

Senator CORMANN: So what are the revised saving figures based on a revised expected start date in the budget? That is the figure that I am chasing and cannot find.

Mr M Robinson: Treasury has responsibility for the revenue side of those figures. As I mentioned before, the Department of Health and Ageing and the department of finance have responsibility for signing off on the expense figures. So I could take that on notice.

Senator CORMANN: So you do not know what that figure is?

Mr M Robinson: Senator, I can take that on notice.

Senator CORMANN: Okay, but do you know what the figure is?

Ms Mrakovcic: Senator, I think we will just have to take it on notice.

Senator CORMANN: It looks to me as if you know what the figure is; you just do not want to share it with us. I do not understand why it was not published in the budget papers. It is a measure that we have discussed in detail before, every previous budget. Why is it a national secret?

CHAIR: Senator Cormann, the officers have said they will take it on notice.

Senator CORMANN: Yes, so we will get the answer two or three months from now.

Answer:

This answer was subsequently provided later in the hearing. See page 74 of the Hansard.