

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Budget Estimates Hearing 24 May-3rd June 2010

Question: PM50

Topic: Health Reform - Commonwealth engagement with states

Type of Question: Hansard, F&PA 103, 25 May

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Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS-I want to ask specifically: how did the Commonwealth actively engage with the states? How many meetings were conducted? You will have to take this on notice. Where were the conducted? Who attended? What meetings were held within the Prime Minister's office? Who was involved from the Prime Minister's office? Was the health department involved? Was Treasury involved? Was the health minister involved? When was the Prime Minister's plan revealed to the states?

Mr Rimmer-Some aspects of that we can talk about now but some we might need to take on notice.

Answer:

Commonwealth and state discussion and negotiation of the National Health and Hospitals Network (NHHN) Agreement was undertaken through a COAG Health Reform Working Group (HRWG). This group comprised officials from the Commonwealth and state first minister's departments, treasuries and health departments.

The HRWG held four meetings in February and March 2010, all conducted at the Melbourne Airport Hilton Hotel.

The meetings were attended by three representatives and one observer from each jurisdiction. Officials from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Treasury attended three of the HRWG meetings.

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Officers from the Prime Minister's office and Health Minister's office did not participate in HRWG meetings.

Health Reform Working Group subgroups were also established to pursue more detailed negotiations and these subgroups met regularly by teleconference or telepresence in the months before the April COAG meeting.

The heads of treasuries and their deputies forum also met in parallel with the HRWG to consider aspects of the NHHN agenda relevant to federal financial relations.

Prior to the establishment of the HRWG, in early 2010, the Minister for Health and Ageing held bilateral discussions with state and territory first ministers and health ministers. These meetings were attended by Minister Roxon's staff, and Commonwealth and State or Territory officials.

In the lead up to the April COAG meeting bilateral meetings and teleconferences were held as required. These meetings involved a combination of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Health and Ageing, state and territory First Ministers and Health Ministers. The face to face meetings were attended by ministerial staff and Commonwealth and state or territory officials.

Substantial elements of the NHHN agenda were discussed by HRWG from February 2010, before the Commonwealth's comprehensive offer was publically released on 3 March 2010 and 12 April 2010 with the publication of the documents: "A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's Future" and "A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's Future: Further Investments in Australia's Health."

The Prime Minister's full plan, as detailed in "A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's Future: Further Investments in Australia's Health" was released to the States on 11 April 2010, prior to the public release.