

Chapter 2

Issues

2.1 This chapter lists the issues examined by the committee during its additional estimates 2017–18 hearings on 28 February 2018 and 1 March 2018.¹

Health Portfolio—28 February 2018

Cross Portfolio Outcomes / Corporate Matters

- Availability of training and rotational places for medical graduates in rural locations, with particular reference to the potential establishment of the 'Murray Darling' medical school.²
- Increases in the total levels of expenditure within the Health Portfolio since supplementary budget estimates 2017–18.³
- Advice provided by the Department of Health (DOH) in relation to the government's proposed trial of drug testing welfare recipients in selected locations.⁴
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's access to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule (PBS).⁵
- Australia's adherence with the provisions of the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.⁶
- Particulars of the roll-out of Headspace centres for providing youth mental health services.⁷
- Payments made by DOH to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia to update its standards.⁸

Outcome 3: Sports and Recreation

- Progression made with developing the National Sports Plan (NSP), particularly regarding consultation with sports communities for determining the policy priorities of the NSP and its expected release date.⁹

1 Note: portfolio outcomes are reported in the order that they were examined during the estimates hearings.

2 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 6–10.

3 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, p. 12.

4 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, p. 13.

5 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 14–15.

6 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 15–19.

7 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 19–20.

8 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 21–22.

- Briefing provided to government regarding a lottery to fund the NSP and the withdrawal of an offer to brief senators.¹⁰
- Australian Sports Commission's return on investment from Olympic-level sports initiatives.¹¹
- Matters pertaining to the operation of the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA), including ASADA's negotiation of a contract with the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation to provide anti-doping services.¹²

Outcome 4: Individual Health Benefits

Program 4.1: Medical Benefits

- Expenditure, total savings, and reinvestments arising from the MBS review and the effects that revised MBS listed items could have on after-hours care providers.¹³
- Effectiveness of MBS listed items in relation to abortion services.¹⁴

Program 4.2: Hearing Services

- Government commissioned reports which made recommendations regarding hearing services, particularly the Translating and Interpreting Service, the supply of hearing technology and the costs associated with potential changes to the Hearing Services Program.¹⁵

Program 4.3: Pharmaceutical Benefits

- Factors influencing general practitioners' prescription of Mifepristone for pregnancy termination.¹⁶
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee's consideration of: removing Primoteston from the PBS; the addition of a high-dose flu vaccine to the National Immunization Program; and approval of a vaccine for the treatment of pertussis.¹⁷

9 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 24–28.

10 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 28–29.

11 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 30–32.

12 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 33–37.

13 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 37–44.

14 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 45–48.

15 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 48–50.

16 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 51–52.

17 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 52–55.

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- Benefits of the Life Saving Drugs Program (LSDP) and the increased quantum of drugs listed through the LSDP.¹⁸

Program 4.4: Private Health Insurance

- Increases to private health insurance (PHI) premiums, particularly in relation to modelling undertaken by DOH of PHI policy options, and trends indicating fewer people consuming PHI products.¹⁹
- Increases in out-of-pocket costs, exclusions of PHI products and the effects of people down-grading their PHI coverage.²⁰

Program 4.5: Medical Indemnity

- Regulation for the management of practitioners' performance and processes for handling complaints made regarding practitioners.²¹

Program 4.6: Dental Services

- Utilisation of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule and the funding and provision of public dentistry through the national partnership agreement.²²

Program 4.7: Health Benefit Compliance

- Publication of comparable in vitro fertilisation data and the compliance rates for services provided by assisted reproductive technology specialists.²³

Outcome 2: Health Access and Support Services

Program 2.3: Health Workforce

- Issues relating to strengthening of the rural workforce including: the conditions under which a former minister was appointed to a position at Charles Sturt University, proposal for the establishment of the Murray-Darling medical school and an update on work undertaken by the National Rural Health Commissioner.²⁴

Program 2.4: Preventative health and chronic disease support

- Progress made with establishing the National Cervical Screening Program and the functionality of the national database to support the program.²⁵

18 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 55–56.

19 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 57–62.

20 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 63–66.

21 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 68–69.

22 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 69–73.

23 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 73–74.

24 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 76–80.

25 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 80–82.

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- Funding model for the National Ice Action Strategy, particularly the allocation of funds to Private Health Networks (PHNs) and the capacity of residential treatment services available through the PHNs.²⁶
 - Funding of health initiatives for the prevention of stillbirths.²⁷
 - Provisions of the Food Standards Code for regulating nano-hydroxyapatite particles in baby formula.²⁸
 - Australia's policy for regulating the herbicide glyphosate.²⁹

Program 2.5: Primary Health and Chronic Disease Support

- Establishment and provisions for the Greater Choice for At Home Palliative Care Measure and other national palliative care initiatives.³⁰

Program 2.7: Hospital Services

- Funding arrangements under the Heads of Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories on public hospital funding and health reform.³¹
- Commonwealth funding contributions to state hospitals in response to increased demand for hospital services, particularly with respect to hospital funding in Western Australia.³²

Program 2.1: Mental Health

- Factors considered by government regarding the allocation of Headspace centre locations, and funding arrangements for the mental health services provided by the centres.³³
- Government's announcement for \$110 million of funding for child and youth mental health services and the organisations that received funding as a result of that announcement.³⁴
- Progress made with implementing the national psychosocial support services measure.³⁵

26 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 84–87.

27 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 88–89.

28 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 89–91.

29 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 91–92.

30 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 92–93.

31 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 93–96.

32 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 96–100.

33 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 101–103.

34 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 105–107.

35 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 107–109.

Outcome 6: Ageing and Aged Care

- Regulatory improvements to aged care accreditation standards in response to the events which occurred at the Oakden aged care facility, particularly in relation to the services identified through the Carnell-Paterson review.³⁶
- Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (AACQA) assessors who work within the aged care industry and the AACQA's response to regulatory failures of aged care quality standards.³⁷
- Auditing and compliance requirements for providers regarding the return of aged care recipients' unspent home care package funds to the Department of Human Services (DHS).³⁸
- Rates and profile of people receiving home care packages, including consumer uptake of home care packages and increases in the availability of additional high-level packages to support older Australian's living at home for longer.³⁹
- Practices of Aged Care Assessment Teams for accessing people for home care packages, particularly the practice of allocating interim packages.⁴⁰

Outcome 5: Regulation, Safety and Protection

- Funding for blood testing services in Katherine, Northern Territory in response to per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination at the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Tindal investigation area, particularly consultations DOH has had with the Katherine community.⁴¹
- Community concern regarding PFAS contamination at RAAF Base Williamstown and the implementation of an epidemiological study undertaken in response to the contamination.⁴²

Outcome 1: Health System Policy, Design and Innovation

- Implementation of the My Health Record initiative and the provisions for people to voluntarily opt-out.⁴³

36 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 110–111, 115–119, 124.

37 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 112–114.

38 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 121–122.

39 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 125–127.

40 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 128–129.

41 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 131–132.

42 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 132–134.

43 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 28 February 2018, pp. 135–137.

Social Services Portfolio—1 March 2018

Cross Portfolio Outcomes / Corporate Matters

- Response by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to an instance of an unauthorised person gaining access to DSS' data, which included personal details of staff, through an information and communications technology (ICT) system administered by a DSS' contractor.⁴⁴
- Measures of staff morale within DSS.⁴⁵

Outcome 3: Disability and Carers

- Opening statement from the Chief Executive Officer of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).⁴⁶
- Transition of people supported by existing disability support programs to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including concerns regarding support for people found ineligible for the NDIS.⁴⁷
- The adequacy of NDIA's staffing-levels and consideration of a recommendation of the Productivity Commission that the NDIA's staffing cap be lifted.⁴⁸
- A potential gap in NDIS supports for children requiring voluntary out-of-home care, including work undertaken to address Commonwealth / state and territory interface issues in the transition of providing disability support through a national model.⁴⁹
- Participant support through the NDIS, including the suitability of living environments, specialist disability accommodation provisions and the core funding of participants' plans.⁵⁰
- Extent of delays in disability service providers receiving payment for services from the NDIA and the quantum of delayed payments.⁵¹

Outcome 4: Housing

- Complaints raised by investors in the National Rental Affordability Scheme, including DSS' appointment of Deloitte to independently investigate the complaints.⁵²

44 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 4–8.

45 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 9–11.

46 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 12–14.

47 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 15–18.

48 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 19–21.

49 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 22–25.

50 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 26–29.

51 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 31–35.

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- Progress made with Commonwealth / state and territory negotiations regarding the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement and particulars of the Treasury Laws Amendment (National Housing and Homelessness Agreement) Bill 2018.⁵³

Outcome 1: Social Security

Program 1.1: Family Tax Benefit

- Effects of regulatory changes to the income thresholds for Family Tax Benefit and Paid Parental Leave, including pauses to indexation, anticipated savings to government and the number of people affected by the changes.⁵⁴

Program 1.3: Income Support for Vulnerable People

- Policy development regarding the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill 2018.⁵⁵

Program 1.5: Supplementary Payments and Support for Income Support Recipients

- Proposed date for the abolishment of the energy supplement and consequential budget implications.⁵⁶

Program 1.6: Allowances and Concessions for Seniors

- Budget implications and people affected by the January 2017' changes to the pension asset test.⁵⁷

Program 1.8: Income Support for People with Disability

- Reassessment and eligibility requirements for people seeking to access the Disability Support Pension.⁵⁸

Outcome 2: Families and Communities

Program 2.1: Families and Communities

- Anticipated operation of the government's proposed drug testing for welfare recipients, including: the number of people expected to test positive to the drug tests; data considered by government in the selection of the trial sites; and consultations had with stakeholders regarding the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Drug Testing Trial) Bill 2018.⁵⁹

52 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 42–46.

53 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 46–51.

54 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 51–56.

55 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 56–61.

56 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, p. 62.

57 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 62–65.

58 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 66–71.

59 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 72–77.

- Performance of the Cashless Debit Card trial, including: trial costs; plans for further implementation; and the appropriateness of the methodology used to evaluate the trial.⁶⁰
- Implementation of a child safety framework in response to a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.⁶¹

Program 2.3: Social and Community Services

- Positions vacant on the Settlement Services Advisory Council and plans to reappoint members of the council following the expiring of their term in late 2017.⁶²

Human Services Portfolio—1 March 2018

Cross Portfolio Outcomes / Corporate Matters

- Operations of the office of the Hon. Michael Keenan MP, Minister for Human Services.⁶³

Outcome 1: Support individuals, families and communities to achieve greater self-sufficiency; through the delivery of policy advice and high quality accessible social, health and child support services and other payments; and support providers and businesses through convenient and efficient service delivery.

- Telephony performance of Centrelink, including high rates of unanswered calls or calls taken with long wait times, and DHS' efforts to better utilise available resources to address telephony problems.⁶⁴
- Changes to average staffing levels in DHS, including the commencement of the recent trial of outsourcing of work to Serco and particulars of the contract that supports the trial.⁶⁵
- Accessibility of correspondence sent by Centrelink to social welfare recipients and Centrelink's review of its correspondence through user acceptance testing processes.⁶⁶
- Centrelink's processes for verifying income information of current and former welfare recipients used to calculate debts raised under the online compliance initiative.⁶⁷

60 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 77–81.

61 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 86–87.

62 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 88–89.

63 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 94–96.

64 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 97–100, 102–104.

65 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 100–102, 109–117.

66 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 104–109.

67 *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2018, pp. 118–122.

Senator Slade Brockman
Chair