



Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2024–25
Wednesday, 5 June 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 10.30pm.

The Committee called the following agencies of the Health and Aged Care Portfolio:

- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency;
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (released without questions);
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand;
- National Health and Medical Research Council;
- National Mental Health Commission;
- National Rural Health Commissioner;
- Office of the Gene Technology Regulator; and
- National Blood Authority.

Some topics discussed by the committee included:

DoHAC – Whole of Portfolio/Corporate Matters

- Changes to staffing levels, including the surveying of staff within the department;
- Guidelines of Department in relation to answering Questions on Notice;
- Change of name of department building, including process and costs;
- International agreements on pandemic preparedness, including IHRs and Australia's obligations;
- Role of the Chief Health Economist;
- COVID-19, including Gain of Function Research, excess mortality, and vaccinations; and
- Life insurance, including testing and rating.

DoHAC – Outcome 1: Health Policy, Access and Support

- Provision of Urgent Care Clinics, including funding, expansion, organisation, and reporting;
- Tabbing of department documents;
- Hospices in Tasmania, with particular reference to stakeholder engagement and funding;
- GP Clinics, with particular reference to access in Tasmania;
- Distribution of teddy bears in parliament;
- Hospitalisation and acute beds for older Australians;
- Use of thinking-style assessment tools, including contract details;
- Government's response to the Community Affairs References Committee's Inquiry into Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare;
- Women's health items in Budget;
- Menopause training for GPs, including the provision of \$1.2 million to support health practitioners better care for women during menopause;

- COVID-19, including origins, gain-of-function research, vaccine safety, vaccine requirements, ivermectin as treatment, and variants of virus;
- Transgender healthcare, including jurisdictional standards and responses;
- Mental health services, including therapy, referral, crisis services, early intervention, funding, Medicare rebates;
- Midwife insurance, with references to budget measures extending professional indemnity insurance;
- Infant formula, including guidelines and marketing;
- Health in My Language program;
- Funding/grants for peak health bodies, including timeframes and commitments;
- Better Access Evaluation Report, and government's response;
- Bulk-billing rates and incentives;
- GP training and uptake;
- Investing in Our Communities Program, with particular reference to status of government's previous commitments;
- National Suicide Prevention Strategy;
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine, including safety for children;
- Residential eating disorder centres and their progress;
- Government response to report for Select Committee into the Provision of and Access to Dental Services in Australia;
- Potential proposals for Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme, including advice given to Minister;
- Government response to Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's Report on Assessment and support services for people with ADHD;
- Use of DFMO for treatment of neuroblastoma, including effectiveness and safety for children;
- Nuclear safety for health care professionals;
- Supply and shortages of Vyvanse;
- Current status of the Australian Centre for Disease Control;
- Delivery of Proton Beam therapy facilities;
- Vaping, including rates of use, regulations;
- Endometriosis clinics, including funding and strategy;
- Medicine shortages, including impact on consumers and manufacturing capability;
- Health impacts of climate change;
- Shingles vaccine, including rollout; and
- National Immunisation Strategy, with specific reference to consultation paper; and
- Ozempic, including compounding replicas, as well as supply and risks.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

- Health and Cultural Safety Strategy;
- Reporting of vaccine-related deaths; and
- Immune imprinting.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand

- Lab-grown meat, including genotoxicity and naming.

National Health and Medical Research Council

- Proposed changes to Australian Dietary guidelines, with particular reference to sustainability, stakeholders, membership of expert committee;
- Funding in relation to Professor Edward C. Holmes, including security checks; and
- COVID-19, including origins.

National Rural Health Commissioner

- MM4 Model, including suitability;
- Innovative Models of Care Program; and
- Mental health, including disparities.

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

- COVID-19 vaccinations; and
- Safety of Office's facilities.

National Blood Authority

- Contamination in blood transfusions.

The committee will next meet at 9.00am on Thursday, 6 June 2024 in Senate Committee Room 2S1, calling the Health and Aged Care Portfolio.