



Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024–25
Thursday, 7 November 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.02am until 10.59pm in Committee Room 2S1.

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

- Professional Services Review;
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency;
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare;
- National Health Funding Body;
- National Health and Medical Research Council;
- National Mental Health Commission;
- National Rural Health Commissioner;
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission;
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care;
- Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (via videoconference);
- Inspector-General of Aged Care;
- Australian Sports Commission;
- National Blood Authority; and
- Office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

Some topics discussed by the committee included:

DoHAC: Whole of Portfolio/Corporate Matters

- Name change of department building, including associated costs, events;
- Chief Medical Officer, including functions of role, hiring process;
- Declaration of interests by relevant ministers;
- Private health insurance income tiers, including impact on Australians;
- Therapeutic Goods Administration, including departmental oversight, pharmacovigilance; and
- Department contracts, including oversight and outcomes.

DoHAC Outcome 2: Individual Health Benefits

- Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, including submissions for meeting, role of Chair;
- Reduction of co-payments on the Medicare Benefits Schedule;
- Expanding Health Technology Assessment (HTA) capacity in Australia;
- Online listing of medical costs, including measures of success, analytics;
- HTA review, including government response;
- PBS, including medicines for rare diseases, orphan drugs;
- 60-day dispensing, including savings, advertising campaign;
- Low-cost comparative testing;

- Private Health Insurance, including its affordability;
- Delivery of radiation therapy, including oncology services;
- Preventative dental care and reported hospitalization;
- Requirements concerning insurance premium increases; and
- Population modelling, particularly in Western Australia.

Professional Services Review

- Review and appeals processes; and
- Robodebt victims and how it relates to the Professional Services Review (PSR) committee.

DoHAC Outcome 1: Health Policy, Access and Support

- Government response to Senate Community Affairs References Committee report on Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare;
- Gender inequity in health care, including migraines, period poverty;
- GP clinics in rural and remote Tasmania;
- Nurse care for multiple sclerosis;
- Proposed Centre for Disease Control, including leadership, funding, location, powers, scope, staffing;
- Performance measures around Medicare benefit services, bulk-billing;
- Newborn bloodspot screening;
- Government response to Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into ADHD;
- Vaccine compensation schemes;
- Urgent Care Clinics, including audits, locations, bulk-billing, referrals, data;
- Primary Health Networks in Bundaberg;
- DNA screening programs;
- Changes to tobacco regulation, including consultation process, impact analysis;
- Health Peak and Advisory Bodies Program, including funding, design;
- Vaping, including provision by pharmacies, policy development, consultation, effectiveness;
- The PHN Cooperative, including function, processes, funding;
- Mental health support, including Medicare Benefits Schedule, data; and
- National Suicide Prevention Office, including men-specific programs.

Professional Services Review

- Review and appeals processes; and
- Robodebt victims and how it relates to the Professional Services Review (PSR) committee.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

- Registration pathways for International Medical Graduates, including expedited processes, regional and remote areas;
- Mandatory assessments for late-career doctors, including discrimination laws; and
- IQNM assessments, including travel costs, locations.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

- Future excess mortality data, including collaboration, COVID-19;
- Australian fertility rates; and
- Percentage of provider fees paid by Medicare, including geographic breakdown.

National Mental Health Commission

- Status of body, including funding.

National Rural Health Commissioner

- Menopause treatment in rural and remote areas; and
- Workforce issues in rural and remote areas, including training.

DoHAC Outcome 3: Ageing and Aged Care

- Aged Care Bill 2024, including case studies, rules, modelling, financial measures, penalties, review, Support at Home, training for workers, amendments, payments, consultation, constitutional breaches, transition bill;
- Residential care, including small-scale models, costs;
- Relation between NDIS and aged care;
- Long-term workforce modelling;
- Software systems;
- Registered Nurses;
- Funding breakdowns; and
- Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessments, including waiting times; and
- Modelling of future sustainability, including finances, bedding.

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

- Use of consultancy and labour hire;
- Reporting of misconduct; and
- Handling of complaints.

Inspector-General of Aged Care

- Aged Care Bill 2024, including rationed model; and
- Younger people in residential aged care.

DoHAC Outcome 4: Sport and Physical Activity

- Grant applications, including processing times, applicant notification, processes;
- National Sports Plan, including leadership;
- Play Well Strategy;
- Future sporting events, including planning, investment, hosting, decision-making process;
- 2024 Olympics, including attendance by officials;
- Green & Gold runway events; and
- 2025 World Beach Volleyball championships, including funding.

Australian Sports Commission

- Australian Institute of Sport campus upgrades, including allocation of funding; and
- Residential programs.

DoHAC Outcome 1: Health Policy, Access and Support (continued)

- Covid-19 Vaccine, including associated reports of death, testing, surveillance, adverse events, spike proteins, long covid;
- Childhood vaccines, including safety, reporting of adverse events; and
- Safety of aluminium in vaccines.

National Blood Authority

- Blood contamination, including historical cases.

The following agencies were released from the hearing without questions:

- National Health and Medical Research Council

- National Health Funding Body
- Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
- Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority

This concludes the committee's examination of the 2024–25 Budget Estimates. Please note the committee has agreed to hold a spillover hearing at a later time.