

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Hearing Health and Wellbeing in Australia**

16 June 2017

**Question no: 1**

**Topic:** Medicare rebates

**Type of Question:** Hansard, page 37

**Member:** Mr Zimmerman

**Question:**

**Mr Stuart:** It is possible that there has been some kind of blue-sky work done at some time in the past in the department, but I am not aware of it having been a particular line of inquiry followed by a government preparing to make changes.

**CHAIR:** Would you mind taking that on notice, then, to check to see whether there is any information about whether it has been considered and, if not, whether there has been a positive determination not to extend any Medicare rebates to audiology services.

**Mr Stuart:** Yes.

**Answer:**

There are Medicare items for diagnostic audiology services provided by, or on behalf of a medical practitioner. These services could be provided by an audiologist on behalf of a medical practitioner.

In 2012, Medicare items were introduced for diagnostic audiology services performed by an audiologist. These items enable an audiologist to perform diagnostic tests upon written request from an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist or, for some services, a neurologist.

In 2016, the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Surgery Clinical Committee of the Medical Benefits Review Taskforce completed phase one of its review of Medicare items focusing on items relating to tonsillectomy, adenoidectomy, insertion of grommets and identification of obsolete items. The remaining items, which include audiology items, are likely to be reviewed during phase two of the ENT review. The timeframe for this is yet to be determined.

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**Question no: 2**

**Topic:** Indigenous hearing health

**Type of Question:** Hansard, page 39

**Member:** Dr Freeland

**Question:**

**Dr FREELANDER:** There has been a lot of talk about Indigenous hearing health, and there seems to be a lot of screening. Does the department have a policy process in place now for Indigenous children who are found to have hearing loss?

**Ms Garrett:** The department runs the Indigenous Australians' Health Program, and that has been running since 2013. Part of that is a screening and assessment training program for GPs, and that program is designed to develop the knowledge and skills that clinicians need to assess and screen hearing health. The department also support a range of other Indigenous hearing programs and, through our funding of Australian Hearing, another Indigenous hearing program. At the moment, there is an independent examination of Commonwealth funded ear health activities, and that includes consideration of opportunities to improve linkages and to coordinate.

**Dr FREELANDER:** When is that due?

**Ms Garrett:** That is underway at the moment. I would have to take on notice when it is due.

**Dr FREELANDER:** Would you be able to let us know that?

**Ms Garrett:** Yes.

**Answer:**

The findings of the independent examination will be available in the second half of 2017.

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**Question no: 3**

**Topic:** Individual action plans

**Type of Question:** Hansard, page 39

**Member:** Mr Zimmerman

**Question:**

**CHAIR:** Would you be able to provide the committee with a list of the areas that are subject to individual action plans?

**Mr Stuart:** Typically, there would be a national strategy and then there would be an implementation plan attached to that.

**CHAIR:** Areas that have a national strategy would be very helpful.

**Mr Stuart:** I am happy to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The following table incorporates National Strategies that are listed on health.gov.au.

<b>Strategy Title</b>	<b>Link</b>
Second National Hepatitis B Strategy 2014-2017	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-hepb">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-hepb</a>
Third National Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2014-2017	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-sti">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-sti</a>
Fourth National Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Strategy 2014-2017	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-hepc">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-hepc</a>
Fourth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2014-2017	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-atsi">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-atsi</a>
Seventh National HIV Strategy 2014-2017	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-hiv">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-bbvs-hiv</a>
National Disability Strategy	<a href="https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy">https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy</a>
Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2017 and beyond	<a href="http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Portals/0/Australian%20National%20Breastfeeding%20Strategy_Fact%20Sheet%201%20Feb%202017.pdf">http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Portals/0/Australian%20National%20Breastfeeding%20Strategy_Fact%20Sheet%201%20Feb%202017.pdf</a>

Australia's National Oral Health Plan 2015-2024	<a href="http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Portals/0/Australia%2027s%20National%20Oral%20Health%20Plan%202015-2024_uploaded%20170216.pdf">http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Portals/0/Australia%2027s%20National%20Oral%20Health%20Plan%202015-2024_uploaded%20170216.pdf</a>
Fifth National Mental Health Plan	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mental-fifth-national-mental-health-plan">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mental-fifth-national-mental-health-plan</a>
National Framework for Maternity Services	<a href="http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Projects/National-Framework-for-Maternity-Services">http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Projects/National-Framework-for-Maternity-Services</a>
National Maternity Services Plan (in development)	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/msr-report~msr-report-nextsteps">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/msr-report~msr-report-nextsteps</a>
National Framework for Communicable Disease Control	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-nat-frame-communic-disease-control.htm">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-nat-frame-communic-disease-control.htm</a>
National Strategy for Quality Use of Medicines	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nmp-pdf-execsumbro-cnt.htm">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nmp-pdf-execsumbro-cnt.htm</a>
National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/nsfcc">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/nsfcc</a>
Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016-2020	<a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/nds-2016-2020">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/nds-2016-2020</a>
National Asthma Strategy	<a href="https://www.nationalasthma.org.au/about-us/national-asthma-strategy">https://www.nationalasthma.org.au/about-us/national-asthma-strategy</a>
National Framework for Action on Dementia 2015-2019	<a href="https://agedcare.health.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care-older-people-their-families-and-carers-dementia/national-framework-for-action-on-dementia-2015-2019">https://agedcare.health.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care-older-people-their-families-and-carers-dementia/national-framework-for-action-on-dementia-2015-2019</a>

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**Question no: 4**

**Topic:** Extending screening

**Type of Question:** Hansard, page 39

**Senator:** Mr Zimmerman

**Question:**

**CHAIR:** Has the department ever assessed policy proposals in relation to extending screening to other age cohorts, apart from newborns?

**Ms Garrett:** I would have to take that on notice. Do you mean ever?

**CHAIR:** In recent memory.

**Ms Garrett:** Not in my memory, so I will take it on notice.

**Answer:**

The Department of Health has reviewed its records for the past ten years and has not found any assessments of policy proposals in relation to extending screening to other age cohorts.

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**Question no: 5**

**Topic:** Screening of children entering school

**Type of Question:** Hansard, page 39

**Senator:** Mr Zimmerman

**Question:**

**CHAIR:** Screening of children entering school was recommended by a Senate inquiry. I am not sure what the government's response at the time was, but I am interested to know whether the department has ever examined the efficacy of such a program and the costing of such a program. If it has, it would be useful for the committee to have that information.

**Ms Garrett:** Sure. I will take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The Department of Health has not assessed the efficacy or costs of additional hearing screenings for children entering school. Responsibility for school age hearing screening services resides with the states and territories.

This is the advice provided in response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee report, *Hear Us: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia*, tabled in Parliament on 13 May 2010.