

Chapter 2

Key issues

2.1 At the 2019–20 Budget estimates hearings, the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee (committee) considered matters relating to the expenditure and operations of the Australian Government for the Health Portfolio and Social Services Portfolio, including the Department of Human Services (DHS).

2.2 The key issues considered by the committee during the hearings are reported in this chapter. Key issues reported include references to the *Committee Hansard*, which provides a verbatim record of the evidence received by the committee.

2.3 Other matters considered at the hearing, but not incorporated in this chapter are included in an index to the *Committee Hansard* at Appendix 1.

Health Portfolio hearing—5 April 2019

Whole of portfolio / Corporate matters

- Total amount of Australian Government hospital funding, as shown in graphs published on the Department of Health (DoH) Health Funding Facts website and the context of the website's development.¹
- Changes to DoH staffing levels through staff transfers, voluntary redundancies and the engagement of contract workers.²

Outcome 6: Ageing and Aged Care

- Work undertaken by DoH to support a transition of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and monetary contributions made by CHSP participants.³
- Availability of home care packages, including: the rollout of additional packages; the level of additional packages; and the number of older Australians waiting to access a home care package.⁴

Outcome 1: Health System Policy, Design and Innovation

- Work undertaken by the Council of Australian Governments to improve patients' access to public reporting of hospital and clinical performance information.⁵

1 *Proof Committee Hansard (Hansard)*, 5 April 2019, pp. 3–8.

2 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 8–13.

3 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 13–16.

4 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 16–22.

5 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 22–23.

- The My Health Record (MHR) system, particularly regarding the operations of the Practice Incentives Program and whether MHR records have been created without consent.⁶

Outcome 2: Health Access and Support Services

- The Australian Government's approach to eating disorder measures, particularly the quantum and source of funding allocated to eating disorder programs and the locations and functions of treatment facilities.⁷
- Expansion of youth mental healthcare services provided through the headspace network, particularly regarding funding amounts and the decision making processes for determining the locations of headspace centres and satellite services.⁸
- Work undertaken to develop a national alcohol strategy and funding and initiatives of the Whole-of-Government Drug Strategy.⁹

Outcome 3: Sport and Recreation

- 2019–20 Budget funding to implement reforms as part of the Government Response to the Review of Australia's Sports Integrity Arrangements.¹⁰
- Processes for approving and announcing Australian Government grants for sporting facilities made under the Community Sport Infrastructure Grants program.¹¹

Outcome 4: Individual Health Benefits

- Number of applications made by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) service providers to become Medicare-eligible and the location of units announced by the Government as receiving MRI Medicare eligibility.¹²

Social Services Portfolio hearing—5 April 2019

Whole of portfolio / Corporate matters

- Lower than projected rate of participants entering the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the process by which a variation in the estimated NDIS expenditure for 2019–20 Budget was made.¹³

6 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 25–27.

7 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 33–40.

8 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 33–40.

9 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 48–52.

10 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 48–52.

11 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 59–61.

12 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 64–66.

13 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 74–83.

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- Support provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) relating to a decision of government to extend the energy assistance payment to additional income support payments, including the Newstart Allowance.¹⁴
 - Involvement of DSS in preparing for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, including funding allocated to support the work of advocacy organisations.¹⁵

Outcome 1: Social Security

- 2019–20 Budget measure to expand the Single Touch Payroll system, particularly how the expanded system is expected to operate to make income reporting through DHS easier.¹⁶

Outcome 2: Families and Communities

- Operation of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (scheme), particularly the processing of applications to the scheme by DSS.¹⁷
- Funding and programs of the Fourth Action Plan 2019–2022 of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, including funding for the prevention and reduction of violence against women and children with Aboriginal and Torres and Strait Islander backgrounds, and expanded emergency accommodation.¹⁸

Outcome 3: Disability and Carers

- Process of transitioning people from other disability support services to the NDIS, particularly regarding the challenges which are causing delays in transition and the time taken for people to commence receiving support services through the NDIS.¹⁹
- Funding provided for new carer services under the Integrated Carer Support Service regional delivery partner program.²⁰

Department of Human Services

- Replacement of a significant information technology system used for processing child support payments, including an external review of that

14 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 85–90.

15 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 90–94.

16 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 94–97.

17 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 103–105.

18 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 105–110.

19 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 110–115.

20 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 117–119.

process undertaken by Deloitte Australia and the challenges that have complicated the replacement.²¹

- Debts raised by the Commonwealth Government under the Online Compliance Initiative (OCI), including updated figures on the number and value of debts raised and the process by which DHS reviews an OCI debt.²²

Health Portfolio hearing—10 April 2019

Whole of portfolio / Corporate matters

- Expenditure, timing and content of Australian Government advertising and information campaigns within the Health Portfolio, particularly for health information campaigns active in the lead up to, and through, the 2019 election period, and the context of a letter sent by the Australian Government which made reference to a political party.²³

Outcome 6: Ageing and Aged Care

- Timing of a decision of government regarding allocation of funding for home care packages in the 2019–20 Budget, with particular reference to a media report suggesting the number of home care places may have been reduced during budget preparation.²⁴
- Work being done to minimise the use of physical and chemical restraints in residential aged care facilities.²⁵
- Older Australians waiting to access home care and residential aged care, and the number of people who have passed away whilst waiting for access to aged care supports.²⁶
- Matters relating to the My Aged Care website, including: operating costs; usability of the website by consumers, including those who may not be confident using technology; and development of an improved website to launch midway through 2019.²⁷

21 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 121–125.

22 *Hansard*, 5 April 2019, pp. 127–130.

23 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 3–12, 43, 47–49.

24 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 12–25.

25 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 27–29, 38–39.

26 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 29–32, 43.

27 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 35–38, 39.

Outcome 2: Health Access and Support Services

- Breakdown of funding allocated for health services in Tasmania, particularly funding for outreach programs provided by the Tasmania Government on behalf of the Commonwealth and funding for elective surgeries.²⁸
- Out-of-pocket costs borne by people being treated for cancer, including the amount of costs; the types of treatments and services being accessed and paid for by cancer patients; interstate variation of costs; and related recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory on Out-of-Pocket Costs.²⁹
- Funding for eating disorder clinics, particularly the process of establishing funding agreements with service providers and Primary Health Networks.³⁰
- Access to youth mental health services, including: workforce constraints effecting headspace services; strategies for managing wait times for access to therapy sessions; and decision making processes for establishing headspace centres or satellites in certain locations.³¹

Outcome 3: Sport and Recreation

- Particulars of certain grants approved under the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.³²
- Administration of the National Recreational Hunting and Sports Shooting Survey 2019 conducted at the request of the Minister for Sport.³³

Outcome 4: Individual Health Benefits

- Increases to the cost of some private health insurance products and the impact of recent private health insurance reforms.³⁴
- Prevention of the listing of glucose monitor FreeStyle Libre on the National Diabetes Services Scheme due to unsuccessful price negotiations.³⁵

Outcome 5: Regulation, Safety and Protection

- Regulation of transvaginal (urogynaecological) surgical mesh devices, including limited circumstances in which those devices may be used and the Australian Government response to the recommendations from the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's inquiry into the number of

28 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 51–57.

29 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 57–65.

30 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 77–81.

31 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 82–97.

32 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 102–106.

33 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 106–109.

34 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 110–111.

35 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 112–113.

women in Australia who have had transvaginal mesh implants and related matters.³⁶

- A review of chemical scheduling for cosmetic and fragrance ingredients and roles of the Australian Government entities responsible for chemical substances.³⁷

Senator Lucy Gichuhi
Chair

36 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 113–115.

37 *Hansard*, 10 April 2019, pp. 116–117.

