

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-005

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

How many bulk billed services have to be repeated?

Answer:

In accordance with the method of Quality Control In Diagnostic Imaging¹ repeat films are those radiographs that were not accepted and required an additional exposure to the patient. These are not billable to Medicare and therefore Medicare data does not hold this information.

In 2009-10 there were 18.2 million diagnostic imaging services billed to Medicare, of these 12.6 million (69 percent) were bulk billed. Whilst it would be possible to ascertain how many of these services were subsequently billed again (same patient same item number) this would be a large and complex extraction. There are legitimate clinical reasons for the same patient to have multiples of the same scan over a period of time (for example with the monitoring of a chest infection for patients in intensive care). Medicare data does not record the rationale for performance of any scan.

¹ Gray J, Winkler N, Stears J, Frank E, 1983. Quality Control In Diagnostic Imaging. An Ansen Publication, Maryland USA.