

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-008

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PBAC)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) now releases its agendas publicly prior to its meetings.

- (a) Has this had any impact on public submissions to PBAC?
- (b) If not, have any efforts been made to engage with relevant stakeholder groups about the items on the PBAC agenda?

Answers:

- a) The PBAC meeting agendas are publicly available six weeks before each meeting is held. Individuals or groups are given two weeks to complete an online form to explain how they, their family and carers would benefit from the PBS listing of a medicine to be considered at the next meeting.

These comments are included in the meeting agenda and considered by the PBAC. The number of comments from consumers, health professionals and their member organisations has been increasing (80 for the November 2008 PBAC meeting and 163 for the March 2011 meeting).

- b) The Department has commenced a project to prepare answers to Frequently Asked Questions based on consumer inquiries. The project will also focus on the type of information consumers can provide to the PBAC, ways in which consumers can provide input, and how the PBAC will use this information. The findings will be provided to the PBAC and the Access to Medicines Working Group in late 2011.

Consumer education sessions will be undertaken in 2011. The Consumers Health Forum (the national peak body representing the interests of Australian healthcare consumers) has also publicised the opportunity to provide comment on the PBAC meeting agendas.