

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-015

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

In a press release at the foundation of MSAC in 1998 the Minister claimed:

- 'Australia first in world to adopt evidence based medicine'
  - The introduction of evidence based medicine and the committee means that the gap between research knowledge and clinical practice will narrow, and patients will benefit earlier from the most advanced procedures drawing on the best scientific and medical evidence'
  - 'MSAC will make definitive and clear judgements on medical procedures based on scientific and clinical grounds'
- a) Does the Government still stand by these public commitments?
  - b) If not, what are MSAC's goals now?
  - c) Does the Government believe its Health Technology Assessment process is meeting the needs of Australian patients?

Answer:

- a) Yes. MSAC's revised Terms of Reference, which were approved by the Minister for Health and Ageing in December 2010 to facilitate MSAC's implementation of recommendations from the Review of Health Technology Assessment in Australia (HTA Review), describe MSAC's purpose as.

*The Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) is an independent scientific committee comprising individuals with expertise in clinical medicine, health economics and consumer matters. It advises the Minister for Health and Ageing on whether a new medical service should be publicly funded based on an assessment of its comparative safety, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and total cost, using the best available evidence. In providing this advice, MSAC may also take other relevant factors into account. This process ensures that Australians have access to medical services that have been shown to be safe and clinically effective, as well as representing value for money for the Australian health care system.*

- b) Not applicable

- c) Yes. The Minister for Health and Ageing and the Minister for Finance and Deregulation announced the Review of Health Technology Assessment in Australia (HTA Review) in December 2008, and released its report in February 2010 (available at [www.health.gov.au/hta](http://www.health.gov.au/hta)). The HTA Review found that Australia's HTA system is generally functioning well, and made recommendations that primarily address process integration, streamlining and consistency. The only recommendation that was specific to MSAC (Recommendation 9) has already been implemented by the Department of Health and Ageing, and implementation of the other recommendations that were agreed by Government is currently on schedule.