

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 23 & 25 February 2011

Question: E11-020

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

There seems to be a disconnect between the funding for PET scans and the needs of cancer patients. Would the Department agree that a review of the approach to health technology assessment that recognises the need to review evidence in light of the potential benefits to patients, health services and the broader health system would be an important step in maximising access for cancer patients to vital imaging technologies?

Answer:

The Australian Government uses health technology assessment (HTA) to assess new technologies against existing health care interventions and ensure Australians have access to medical services that are safe and clinically effective, as well as representing value for money for the Australian health care system. HTA processes consider available evidence on the comparative safety, clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness as well as issues of access, equity and health care resource impacts.

The Government has already conducted a public review, the *Review of Health Technology Assessment in Australia* (HTA Review), which reported in December 2009. Its purpose was to identify how Commonwealth HTA processes could be improved to reduce regulatory burden without compromising timely and affordable access to quality, cost effective health care interventions that improve health outcomes.

The HTA Review found that current Commonwealth HTA processes generally work well, and made recommendations to improve how the HTA system works as a whole. The government accepted 13 of the 16 recommendations of the HTA Review report for implementation by the Department of Health and Ageing. The department has commenced work on implementing all 13 recommendations accepted by the Government, with progressive implementation planned from mid 2010 to the end of 2011.