

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-021

OUTCOME 3: Access to Medical Services

Topic: Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Rachel Siewert asked:

I understand that the total Federal Budget for diagnostic imaging is about \$2 billion, with the expenditure on PET scans at about \$20 million. As I understand it, MSAC's figures indicate a high probability that much of the PET expenditure is saved because other tests and treatments are shown to be necessary.

- a) Would the Department agree with this assumption?
- b) Would the Department agree that restricting expenditure on PET costs lives, causes hardships to our most vulnerable citizens and wastes money?

Answer:

- a) The Australian Government currently funds positron emission tomography (PET) services through 34 separate service items, 15 of which are currently listed in the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and able to be claimed by any eligible PET provider. Total MBS expenditure on diagnostic imaging services was \$2.15 billion in 2009-10. Medicare benefits for PET services amounted to \$25.37 million over the same period. These items were all implemented following advice from MSAC regarding the circumstances under which public funding of those particular services should be supported. MSAC's advice was based on an appraisal of the strength of the available evidence in relation to safety, clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, taking other factors into account where relevant.
- b) The Department of Health and Ageing is not aware of any evidence that the unrestricted ordering of PET scans would be a cost-effective method of improving health outcomes.