

ANSWER TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-131

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: MEDICARE REBATES

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) How many patients across Australia have been denied Medicare rebates because the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency has not renewed medical practitioner registrations by due dates?
- b) How many practised illegally?
- c) How many patients cannot claim private health insurance for those consultations?
- d) What is going to be done to work out all these issues?
- e) What impact has there been on hospitals?
- f) How many hospitals turned away nurses and graduate nurses taking up their first jobs because they were not registered?

Answer

- a) The Department is unable to answer this question. AHPRA administers the receipt and processing of applications for registration and maintains a public register of registered health practitioners. Medicare Australia is responsible for the payment of claims from patients for services provided by eligible health professionals. AHPRA advises Medicare Australia when a practitioner is not eligible to provide Medicare rebateable services. The Department does not hold data on numbers of practitioners whose registration has lapsed.
- b) The Department is not able to determine this.
- c) Private health insurance is not payable for out of hospital services where a Medicare rebate is payable. In relation to in-hospital services, an unregistered practitioner cannot provide services for the purposes of private health insurance. The Department does not hold data on claims rejected by private health insurers.
- d) On 17 February 2011 the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council met and discussed a range of issues relating to AHPRA's operations, particularly around access and registration processes, during the transition to the new scheme. Ministers agreed to provide additional support to AHPRA to manage its registration functions and to undertake additional monitoring of AHPRA operations. State and territory governments and the Commonwealth are working together to determine how best to support AHPRA.
- e) The Department is unable to answer this question. The Commonwealth does not have responsibility for employment of health practitioners in hospitals.
- f) The Department is unable to answer this question. The Commonwealth does not have responsibility for employment of health practitioners in hospitals.