

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-154

OUTCOME 5: Primary Care

Topic: GP SUPER CLINICS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Due to the rollout of the GP Super Clinics program, the Medicare Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) for afterhours care will be phased out by 2013, which will adversely affect rural GP's (who mostly provide their own afterhours cover), regardless of whether a GP Super Clinic has been established in a particular locality:

- a) What was the reasoning/rationale behind this?
- b) What support will be provided to those rural and regional GP's that will be adversely impacted, but will still be required to provide afterhours

Answer:

- a) The changes to the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) after hours incentives announced in the 2010-11 Budget were not a consequence of the rollout of the GP Superclinics Program. These changes were announced as part of broader reforms to after hours primary care, including the establishment of a national after hours GP telephone advice service. As a result of these reforms, the after hours incentives currently available through the PIP will cease from 1 July 2013. These incentives will be replaced with additional funding for after hours primary care services to be provided through Medicare Locals. Each Medicare Local will plan how best to meet the after hours needs of its region, and use the funding provided to support the most appropriate after hours arrangements.

Following the COAG Heads of Agreement on Health Reform, the establishment of Medicare Locals has been brought forward. 15 Medicare Locals will be established by 1 July 2011, a further 15 by 1 January 2012 and the remainder by 1 July 2012. Medicare Locals will now be funded in their first year of operation to plan and coordinate face-to-face after hours primary care arrangements for their region. The funding that will be made available to Medicare Locals upon their establishment will complement the PIP incentives which will continue to be available until 1 July 2013. Medicare Locals will use the funding they receive upon their establishment to address gaps in after hours services in their region.

- b) Where communities are well serviced by after hours primary care providers, the Government's expectation is that Medicare Locals will continue to support and build on these services, particularly where they are meeting community needs. For many of these services, including rural GPs providing their own after hours care, this means that the funding support that has been available in the past through the PIP will continue to be available but as a single grant administered through Medicare Locals.