

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000013

OUTCOME: 4 - Individual Health Benefits

Topic: MBS Freeze

Type of Question: Hansard Page 27, 1 March 2017

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

Senator DI NATALE: This might be a question for the minister. I understand that the Prime Minister has said that there is the prospect of reviewing the freeze subject to 'a very clear set of reforms that will help make the system stronger and better.' Could you shed some light on what the Prime Minister meant by that.

Senator Nash: The minister is obviously undertaking a whole range of consultations in his new role as health minister across the sector. I cannot comment directly on that, and it would be a question for him.

Senator DI NATALE: This was the Prime Minister who said this.

Senator Nash: Indeed. But it is a matter for the health minister and the Prime Minister to respond. I am happy to take that on notice for you, though.

Senator DI NATALE: Specifically he said that it would be subject to a very clear set of reforms. Obviously if they are very clear then they will be outlined. Could you provide on notice information as to what those reforms are, if you do not have that at hand.

Senator Nash: I can try and do that for you.

Answer:

The Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, is working on the long-term plan for health which will centre on four pillars: a commitment to strengthening Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme; public hospital funding arrangements with state and territory governments through the Council of Australian Governments; mental health services and preventative health; and medical research.

As part of this long term vision the Minister has maintained the Government's commitment to a strong evidence based framework for Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) funding including a continued focus on the MBS Review being led by Professor Bruce Robinson and the Medical Services Advisory Committee led by Professor Robyn Ward. This is being complemented by financing trials such as those being progressed through Health Care Homes and improved delivery of care at the local level being coordinated and implemented by the Primary Health Networks.

Working with the medical profession across all of these areas of reform is important in supporting a long term sustainable Medicare investment.