

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000038

**OUTCOME:** 4 - Individual Health Benefits

**Topic:** Bulk Billing

**Type of Question:** Hansard, Page 61, 1 March 2017

**Senator:** Watt, Murray

**Question:**

Senator WATT: These are what I suspect will be the last questions from the opposition on outcome 4. Mr Bowles, they are about Medicare and bulk billing in particular, so it is a fairly general thing under this outcome. With respect to the bulk billing rate, my understanding is that it is reported for all non-referred attendances. I understand the percentage of people who are bulk billed for non-referred attendances is reported by the department.

Mr Bowles: I will get Mr Stuart to come to the table. We are talking about services, not people.

Senator WATT: Yes, that is right. So if I go five times it counts as five and not one, is that right?

Mr Bowles: It is services, yes.

Mr Stuart: The department has a long-standing publication series on bulk billing, which includes all non-referred attendances as a proxy for general practice. It has been publishing the data like that since about 1984.

Senator WATT: How often is that published?

Mr Stuart: We publish quarterly.

Senator WATT: What is the most recent quarter that has been published?

Mr Stuart: We published the December quarter data a few days ago.

Senator WATT: So we would be expecting to get the March quarter data in about April or May?

Mr Stuart: Yes.

Senator WATT: Is that data broken down by electorate?

Mr Stuart: We do not generally publish electorate-level data.

Senator WATT: But it would be possible to publish that on an electorate basis, wouldn't it?

Mr Stuart: In principle.

Mr Bowles: It would be a lot of work, though.

Mr Stuart: We do not generally produce or publish that information.

Senator WATT: I understand that might not be what you do. There are many departments that can publish data on an electorate basis, so there would be no reason—

Mr Bowles: I think we would have to have a look, Senator. I am just flagging that it is a lot of work because there are 385 million services. It is hard work.

Senator WATT: Could you take that on notice, please?

Mr Bowles: Yes.

**Answer:**

Bulk billing rates by Commonwealth Electorates have been provided for the financial years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 through Freedom of Information processes (FOI 050-1415, FOI 037-1516 and FOI 054-1617) and are available on the Department of Health website at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/foi-disc-log-2016-17>