

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000327

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: National Cancer Screening Register

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

Please outline in detail the specific reasons for the delay to the introduction of the National Cancer Screening Register.

- a) Who is responsible for the delay?
- b) What penalties are applicable to either the Department of Health, Telstra Health or any other party?
- c) How many women are impacted by the delay?
- d) Please break down the full cost of the delay to the department.

Answer:

- a) The reasons for the delay include that the complexity of assimilating and migrating data from eight state and territory cervical registers, along with the DHS register (including the bowel program), data migration, into one register, was greater than realised. That was combined with the complex schedule and interdependencies in the register's build for both the bowel and cervical programs.
- b) Under the Services Agreement, if the NCSR legislation was not enacted and fully operative by 30 October 2016, this could constitute an Excusable Event delay. Under the Services Agreement, Health is liable to meet the Service Provider's additional costs arising from or in relation to that delay.

The legislation received Royal Assent on 20 October 2016 and commenced on 21 October 2016.

- c) All women eligible to participate in the renewed National Cervical Screening Program will continue to be supported under the current cervical screening program.

The existing program will continue to operate, supported by the existing Pap test and current state and territory-based registers.

The interim arrangements that will be in place from 1 May 2017 to support the existing Pap test program include a new Liquid Based Cytology (LBC) MBS item that will only be available until 30 November 2017. Women can claim a rebate for this test or can continue to claim for the conventional cytology test (but not both).

- d) The full costs to the Department of Health for the delay include the additional MBS Item (\$13.5 million) and the assistance package to pathology labs (\$3 million). There are additional costs to DHS to continue to operate the register for the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, which are still subject to confirmation and a decision of government.