

## Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

### BUDGET ESTIMATES - 2 JUNE 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** National Mental Health Reform

**Question reference number:** HS 17

**Senator:** Fierravanti-Wells

**Type of question:** Hansard page 83

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 22 July 2011

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

**Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** Is the reason that you will not need to do that work because of the fact that the government is cutting back on the Better Access initiative and therefore there will not be as many claims to process?

**Ms Golightly:** I will check into that for you, but most of the money that we get is to put items on to the MBS or take items off the MBS. From memory, I think this one is taking items off, but I will check on that and get back to you.

**Ms Thomson:** With regard to that measure, you are correct. There is a reduction in the number of allied mental health services available under this particular item. There has been a reduction.

**Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** So to come to that figure, which is almost \$1 million over the forward estimates, how have you assessed that \$1 million? Do you work out that there are X-number less claims that you will need to process? Do you work it on a per claims basis or do you work it out as a global fee?

**Ms Thomson:** Some of those assumptions around that particular budget measure have been developed with our colleagues at the Department of Health and Ageing. There is a number of individual services that are offered underneath the initiative, as well as group therapy sessions. Under this particular measure, the number of individual sessions, which is currently up to 18, will be reduced to 10 and the number of group sessions are currently at 12 and they will be reduced to 10, so there has been a slight reduction.

**Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** That is my point. To get to the \$1 million you must have worked out how many fewer claims you are going to process, so my question to you is: how many fewer claims will you be processing?

**Ms Golightly:** We will have to take that on notice. It is all part of the methodology behind it.

**Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** I appreciate that. I also appreciate the assumptions and the basis upon which it is done. I understand that is done primarily with DoHA as the lead and you are executing instructions.

**Ms Golightly:** Yes. We will get you that detail.

**Answer:**

The Department of Health and Ageing has estimated that over the forward estimate period, Medicare Australia will process 1.075 million fewer allied health services under the Better Access Initiative. This equates to 126,000, 248,000, 314,000 and 387,000 fewer services for each respective year.