

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-202

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: EVALUATION OF THE BETTER ACCESS INITIATIVE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Is this the only evaluation of the Better Access program that is to occur? How will the programs ongoing progress be monitored? (Refer Page 43 Hansard 30 May.)

Answer:

The Better Access program was introduced in November 2006. At this time, new item numbers were added to the Medicare Benefits Schedule to provide a rebate for selected mental health services provided by GPs, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists. With the introduction of the Better Access program the Australian Government decided to undertake an independent and wide-reaching program evaluation to assess the overall appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of the initiative.

Following the completion of the evaluation at the end of 2010 and after four years of operation, the Government has a clear sense of how the program is being used by providers and consumers. It will be a matter for the Government to decide if there will be any further formal evaluations of the program.

The program will continue to be monitored through regular reports such as those covering details of Medicare services provided under the initiative and expenditure data.