

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 1 – 2 June 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000607

OUTCOME: 3 - Access to Medical and Dental Services

Topic: MBS

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Question:

What process is the Government adopting to rationalize costs from the PBS and MBS? Will there be guaranteed protections for the programs that support better health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Answer:

The Australian Government has signed five year agreements with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Generic Medicines Industry Association as part of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Access and Sustainability Package (the PBS Package) which includes the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement (6CPA).

This is an important reform package which is the result of extensive consultations and negotiations. The PBS Package is a strongly supported package of over 20 measures that will ensure ongoing access to innovative medicines through a sustainable PBS. Importantly, these measures will help the Government to continue to list new high cost medicines on the PBS in a timely manner, improving consumers' access. They will also improve affordability for consumers and taxpayers through cheaper medicine prices.

There are no changes to the PBS (as part of these reforms) that will impact upon accessibility or eligibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In particular, the Section 100 Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) Programme and PBS Co-payment Measure will continue to be provided without any changes.

Savings measures for the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) are outlined in the budget papers. There is no savings target for the MBS Review Taskforce.

Overall, the Government is investing \$3.3 billion over the next four financial years through the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme, an increase of over \$550 million when compared with the previous four years. \$1.4 billion is being provided over three years to enable the continued delivery of primary health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the nation.