

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 6 May 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000357

OUTCOME: 4 - Individual Health Benefits

Topic: Pathology and Diagnostic Imaging - MYEFO

Type of Question: Hansard Page 28, 6 May 2016

Senator: Gallagher, Katy

Question:

Senator GALLAGHER: Why haven't the instruments been tabled and presented to the Senate?

Senator Nash: I would have to take that on notice for you.

Senator GALLAGHER: There were some changes announced in December to cut \$650 million over four years, or savings generated of that order, due to come into effect, with a 15-day disallowance period. Why weren't these instruments provided to the Senate to allow time for consideration and also for public scrutiny of what those tables look like?

Senator Nash: Again, Senator, it is a matter for Minister Ley. I am happy to take that on notice for you and come back to you.

Senator GALLAGHER: Is the government trying to avoid presenting those instruments for some reason?

Senator Nash: No, I would not categorise it like that at all. As I say, I am not the minister responsible—I am doing it on behalf of Minister Ley and I am happy to take it on notice for you.

Senator GALLAGHER: Again, it seems strange that a pretty significant change announced in December, due to come into effect in six or seven weeks, a change which the industry is certainly raising concerns about, will come into effect the day before a federal election, as it turns out, but we are not going to be provided with any of the information that will show what that means, what the detail is, and be provided with the opportunity to comment on it.

Senator Nash: Was that a statement, Senator; is there a question?

Senator GALLAGHER: Does the government have a response to that? Why has the government chosen not to table these instruments but has decided to continue with the implementation date?

Senator Nash: Again, that is a matter for Minister Ley and I am very happy to take it on notice for you and get some advice.

Senator GALLAGHER: Have they been approved by the executive council?

Senator Nash: I think, again, we would need to take that on notice for you for Minister Ley.

Senator GALLAGHER: Is there any way we can get an answer today on that? It is pretty fundamental—there is a change coming in.

Senator Nash: I could not assume anything but I am happy to look at that for you.

Answer:

The *Health Insurance (Diagnostic Imaging Services Table) Regulation 2016* and the *Health Insurance (Pathology Services Table) Regulation 2016* were made on 17 August 2016, and were tabled in both the House of Representatives and the Senate on 30 August 2016.

The 2015-16 MYEFO measure to change the bulk billing arrangements for diagnostic imaging and pathology was not included in these instruments. This MYEFO measure was superseded by the 'Coalition's plan for access to affordable pathology for all Australians' and the 'Coalition's plan for access to affordable diagnostic imaging for all Australians'.