

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-179

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: CHEMOTHERAPY DRUGS

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

The Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy measure, in combination with Price disclosure, has significantly reduced the funding for the chemotherapy drugs sector. Has the department analysed the future viability of the sector and the subsequent impact that demise will have on cancer patients?

Answer:

The Department of Health and Ageing is in active ongoing discussions with a broad range of stakeholders including pharmacists, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (the Guild), consumers, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, medical oncology groups and representatives from the public and private sector and chemotherapy reconstitution services regarding any potential issue/impacts. The Department is committed to working with stakeholders in the various pharmacy settings to identify and address, if needed, any issues within the scope of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

The viability of the sector is supported through the funding for new cancer drugs. Since 2007, 30 new medicines to treat 15 different types of cancer at a cost of \$1.3 billion have been listed, saving many patients over \$5,000 per treatment. Recent new cancer medicines listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme include cetuximab to treat bowel cancer, costing the taxpayer \$272 million dollars, and cabazitaxel, a treatment for prostate cancer, which will cost \$26 million and save cancer patients nearly \$6,000 per treatment.