

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 17 & 19 October 2012**

**Question:** E12-181

**OUTCOME 2:** Access to Pharmaceutical Services

**Topic:** CHEMOTHERAPY DRUGS

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Number of pages:** 1

**Senator:** Senator Boyce

**Question:**

What guarantees does the Government give to the tens of thousands of cancer patients who receive chemotherapy infusions every day that they will be able to obtain their chemotherapy treatments when they want to and where they want to?

**Answer:**

The Government supports the provision of chemotherapy infusion outpatient services and patient choice of treatment setting in the community through a variety of access and clinical service delivery models in the private and public hospital oncology outpatient setting.

This support includes the subsidisation of Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS)-listed intravenous chemotherapy medicines for use in public and private hospitals and private hospital clinic use. For cancer medicines, patients pay no more than one PBS co-payment for the first prescription dispensed, either \$5.90 or \$36.10 for the first injection or infusion of the medicine and nothing for repeats of the prescription.

The Department of Health and Ageing is in ongoing consultations with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the private hospital sector to gain a first-hand understanding of the costs and business models for the supply of chemotherapy medicines. The Department is not aware of nor received reports of closures or discontinuations in chemotherapy services as a result of price disclosure changes.

Patients in regional areas are being supported to receive chemotherapy infusions where they want to through the construction of 25 regional cancer centres and associated accommodation facilities at a cost of \$676 million.

The availability of cancer drugs is also being supported through funding for new cancer drugs. Since 2007, at an additional cost of \$1.3 billion, 30 new medicines have been listed to treat 15 different types of cancers on the PBS, saving many patients over \$5,000 per treatment. Recent new cancer medicines listed on the PBS 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.