

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001137

OUTCOME: 2 - Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Hepatitis C/Access to Pharmaceutical Products

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

- a) How does the Department of Health plan on achieving the commendable targets outlined in the 4th National Hepatitis C strategy?
- b) How will the Department achieve the targets in the 4th National Hepatitis C strategy if the PBAC does not approve transformational new treatments that effectively represent a cure for HCV?

Answer:

- a) The Fourth National Hepatitis C Strategy was developed by the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments and non-government partners including community-based organisations, professional organisations, researchers and clinicians. This strategy was endorsed by all Australian Governments through the COAG Health Council.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee of the Australian Health Minister's Advisory Committee, is responsible for the development of an Implementation and Evaluation Plan which will detail how priority actions will be implemented, and how the goals, targets and objectives will be monitored.

All partners to the strategy, including the Department of Health, state and territory health departments, community organisations, service delivery organisations, professional bodies and research organisations are responsible for implementing the priority action areas and working towards achieving the testing and treatment targets.

- b) There are many medicines available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for the treatment of hepatitis C, including new and innovative treatments.

On 1 April 2013, telaprevir (brand name Incivo[®]) and boceprevir (brand name Victrelis[®]) were listed on the PBS for treatment of patients with hepatitis C virus genotype 1. More recently, simeprevir (brand name Olysio[®]) was listed for the treatment of patients with hepatitis C virus genotype 1. The PBS listing of simeprevir occurred on 1 December 2014. All were listed following the recommendation of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).

The PBAC, an independent, expert advisory body comprising doctors, other health professionals and a consumer representative, makes recommendations to the Australian Government about PBS listings. The Government cannot list a medicine on the PBS unless the PBAC makes a recommendation in favour of its listing – and does not interfere with the independent PBAC process.