

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001386

OUTCOME: 1 - Population Health

Topic: Cancer Treatments

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Carr, Kim

Question:

With more innovation in cancer treatments and the increasing ability to tailor treatments to individual patients, how does the Government plan to ensure that these personalised treatments are efficiently reviewed through the co-dependant technology process so that patients have early access to them?

Answer:

Since coming into office, this Government has committed more than \$250 million to list cancer drugs on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The Government is committed to efficient and rigorous review of all new health technologies, including where two or more health technologies are co-dependent, which means that they deliver better outcomes when used in conjunction with each other. This is often referred to as targeted therapies or personalised medicine.

There is a coordinated assessment process in place for co-dependent technologies through both the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) and Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) to avoid the undesirable situation where subsidised patient access is ready for one of the co-dependent health technologies (drug or test) but not the other.

Since 1 October 2013, there have been seven coordinated listings of co-dependent health technologies on the PBS and the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). A recent example is the co-dependent listing of Tafenlar (dabrafenib) on the PBS and BRAF mutation testing on the MBS for advanced melanoma. The coordinated listing on 1 December 2013 occurred only 96 days after regulatory approval of Tafenlar by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, with the July 2013 PBAC meeting recommending Tafenlar and the August 2013 MSAC meeting supported the public funding of the BRAF mutation testing, and Government announcing the funding for the listing in October 2013.