

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001454

OUTCOME: 3 - Access to Medical and Dental Services

Topic: Pathology and Diagnostic Imaging Services

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question:

a) Is the Department aware that there are small independent pathology practices still operating in Australia which do both histology and clinical pathology (blood tests) and provide the full pathology service?

The majority of the non-histology tests, which are the overwhelming majority of pathology tests performed (blood tests, microbiology) are bulk billed (no accounts) and at least 50 percent of these patients do not go to collection centres and interface with laboratory staff. Therefore, an increase in accounts for at least 7 dollars will have to be sent to patients not used to receiving accounts for pathology.

b) What is the likelihood that patients will pay? Does the Department believe this is an efficient way to collect the 7 dollar co-payment?

c) Does the Department consider the extra 2 dollars above the 5 dollar fee reduction i.e. the 7 dollar co-payment will cover the costs of sending out accounts and collecting a fee at collection centres where money is not normally collected?

Answer:

On 9 December 2014, the Government announced that the \$7 Medicare co-payment measure announced in the 2014-15 Budget will no longer proceed.