

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 19 October 2016**

**Ref No:** SQ16-000473

**OUTCOME:** 4 - Individual Health Benefits

**Topic:** Excessive Surgeons' Fees - Out-of-Pocket

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

**Senator:** Griff, Stirling

**Question:**

Please provide an overview of the complaints process for patients who have been charged unreasonable or excessive fees and details of the number of complaints made each year for the past 3 years. Please provide details on the outcomes of these complaints.

**Answer:**

While Medical practitioners are free to set their own fees for their services, they are obliged to fully explain their fees and any applicable MBS and private health insurance rebates to their patients. This is known as informed financial consent and is set out in the Medical Board of Australia's code of conduct for doctors. If patients feel they that they did not receive appropriate fee information prior to receiving medical treatment, they can lodge a complaint with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, which handles them on behalf of the Medical Board of Australia.

Patients can also contact their state health service complaints agency if they feel they did not receive appropriate fee information:

ACT - Office of the Health Services Commissioner	SA - Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner
NSW – Health Care Complaints Commission	TAS – Health Complaints Commissioner
NT - Health and Community Services Complaints Commission	VIC – Office of the Health Services Commissioner
QLD – Office of the Health Ombudsman	WA - Health and Disability Services Complaints Office

The Department is not privy to the confidential information collected by these agencies and the Department of Health does not itself collect data on patient complaints about unreasonable or excessive fees charged for Medicare Benefits Schedule funded medical services.