

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Agency - Comcare

Department of Employment Question No. EM0838_15

Senator McKenzie asked on 2 June 2014 on proof Hansard page 84

Question

Comcare - Cost of claimants music lessons

Senator McKENZIE: Thank you. Could you provide the total cost of providing claimants' music lessons? Mr Watson: I would have to get that information. Senator McKENZIE: Is there a range of therapies, if you like, that are accessed by claimants? Is there any criteria around what constitutes treatment? Mr Watson: There are guidelines. The act requires Comcare to provide treatments that are reasonable and necessary. Senator McKENZIE: Reasonable and necessary, yes. And are music lessons reasonable and necessary treatment? Mr Watson: It could be approved in an individual case if that were deemed by the treater in Comcare to be working towards the rehabilitation of the person, yes. Senator McKENZIE: Could you please provide the total costs of providing claimants' music lessons? Mr Watson: I can get that information for you.

Answer

Comcare is unable to provide the total cost of music lessons paid for by Comcare on existing claims for compensation. Provision of music lessons as medical treatment or as part of a rehabilitation plan approved by the rehabilitation authority is uncommon and no payment categories exist to capture this specific information.

An accurate costing would be an unreasonable diversion of resources as Comcare would have to manually search individual invoices. A computerised text search of invoice payment item descriptions for claims containing the word 'music' suggests there is only one Injured Worker who has received music lessons within the last 5 years. Other items identified by this search included music therapy, musician ear plugs, hearing aids and cables.

The invoices identified as being music lessons were paid as part of the injured worker's rehabilitation program which is approved by the rehabilitation authority, normally the employee's employer, not Comcare.

If Comcare were to receive a request for music therapy as medical treatment Comcare would need to be satisfied the music therapy was reasonable and obtained in relation to the compensable condition.

When making an assessment of reasonableness Comcare relies on medical evidence and the principles outlined in the Clinical Framework For the Delivery of Health Services (the Clinical Framework) developed by the Transport Accident Commission and WorkSafe Victoria.

The Clinical Framework outlines a set of guiding principles for the delivery of health services. These principles are intended to support healthcare professionals in their treatment of an injury through:

- Measurement and demonstration of the effectiveness of treatment
- Adoption of a biopsychosocial approach
- Empowering the injured person to manage their injury
- Implementing goals focused on optimising function, participation and return to work, and
- Base treatment on best available research evidence.

Comcare also maintains a Clinical Panel made up of medical professionals who continue to work in their chosen fields. Clinical Panel members are available to advise Claims Services Officers on requested medical treatment and also liaise directly with injured workers' treating practitioners to discuss recommended medical treatment.