

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Additional Estimates 2006-2007, 13th and 16th February, 2007

Question Number: HS36

Agency: Medicare Australia

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Medicare Safety Net

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Hansard Page F&PA 58

SENATOR WONG asked on 16/02/2007:

Senator WONG—After the introduction of the Medicare safety net was there an administrative process put in place whereby if a procedure were charged three times over the schedule fee it would be flagged?

Ms Argall—I am not personally aware of that and it has not been raised in the two years I have been there, but I will ask my colleagues to assist me as to whether anyone is aware of it. We are not aware of that. I will take it on notice and check.

Senator WONG—To sum up the question, is any data collected by Medicare which identifies procedures which are charged in excess of the schedule fee? In particular, is there any data collected or identified which indicates procedures which charge three times over the schedule fee? That can be taken on notice.

ANSWER:

All charges are collected as part of the payment record. Practitioners are able to charge what they believe is appropriate for the service they provide.

During the payment process, the payment system highlights services where the charge is 150 per cent higher than the Medicare schedule fee. If a charge is higher than 350 per cent of the schedule fee, a warning message alerts the operator to check and confirm the accuracy of the entry. In both cases, the reason for this is to ensure the Medicare customer service officer correctly entered the charge. Once this has been checked, the claim is paid in accordance with the rebate level in the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 4 hours at an estimated cost of \$253.