

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: 1.1.1 – Domestic Policy
Topic: National Health Reform

Senator: Fierravanti-Wells

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Question:

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: For example, in the mark 1 agreement we talk about the responsibilities of the Commonwealth and it sets out a whole range of responsibilities to 1 July – for example, B10 and B11. How much of B10 and B11 have been superseded by the second agreement, given the general descriptions? What are very specific clauses about responsibilities of the Commonwealth appear to be superseded by more general terms of pursuing further reforms in mental health, dental health and aged care over the next three years. Do you see my point, Mr Rimmer? I am just not sure what survives and what does not, and there are the time frames, particularly in terms of the time frames in the yellow book. We have traversed those.

Mr Rimmer: I will enquire as to whether we have information on that question.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Surely, Mr Rimmer. I do not want to trawl through each of the clauses, but you can appreciate what I am trying to get to the bottom of. We have a very detailed mark I agreement, we have a not so detailed mark II agreement, and I am not sure how they compare.

Answer:

The Heads of Agreement on National Health Reform, signed at the Council of Australian Governments meeting of 13 February 2011, sets out the intentions of all governments to work in partnership on health reform. The technical detail is currently being worked through by officials.

In relation to Clauses B10 and B11, the Heads of Agreement commits the Commonwealth and states and territories to continue to work on system-wide policy and state-wide planning for general practitioner and primary health care services. This will ensure that all jurisdictions work together to design a primary health care system that is more efficient and nationally unified. The Commonwealth has also committed to establish Medicare Locals to improve service integration and the continuity of patient care.