

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2005-2006, 1 November 2005

Question: HS57

Outcome 1, Output Group 1.1

Topic: Medicare Australia – Online Billing

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR EVANS asked on 1/11/2005:

1. How many doctors' offices use MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online for non-bulk billed consultations?
2. How many doctors does this represent?
3. What proportion of doctors' services is claimed through MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online?
4. How many GP offices use MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online for non-bulk billed consultations?
5. How many GPs does this represent?
6. What proportion of GP services is claimed through MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online?
7. What is the Department doing to address the concerns that GPs have about how this system currently operates, viz: that the transactions are in real time?
8. How many pharmacies currently use PBS Online?
9. Is the Department aware of complaints from pharmacists about the slow rate of payments from PBS Online?
10. What is the Department doing to address the concerns that pharmacists have about how this system currently operates, viz: that the transactions are in real time?

Answer:

1. In October 2005, of the 4,146 practices using Medicare Australia's online claiming, 1,132 practices, (27.3%), claimed, among other things, non-bulk billed consultations (Patient Claims).
2. In October 2005, 3,641 doctors used Medicare Australia's online claiming for out of hospital patient claims.
3. In October 2005, 23.66% of bulk bill services were claimed via Medicare Australia's online claiming; 4.75% of out of hospital patient claims were claimed via online claiming. In total, 17.94% of doctors' services were claimed online.

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4. In October 2005, of the 3,073 general practices using Medicare Australia's online claiming, 879 practices, (28.6%), claimed non-bulk billed consultations online.
5. In October 2005, 2,972 general practitioners used online claiming for out of hospital patient claims.
6. In October 2005, 40.46% of General Practice bulk bill services were claimed via Medicare Australia's online claiming; 8.54% of General Practice out of hospital patient claims were claimed via Medicare Australia's online claiming. In total, 32.24% of General Practice services were claimed online.
7. The Department of Health and Ageing has advised that they will be responding to this question.
8. As at 30 November 2005, there were 138 pharmacies transmitting their PBS claims online. In addition, a further 442 pharmacies had completed the registration process and approximately another 700 pharmacies had started the registration process. The total number of pharmacies who have either completed or started the registration process for online claiming represents approximately 25% of community pharmacies.
9. Medicare Australia is not aware of complaints from pharmacists regarding the slow rate of payments from PBS Online. Online pharmacies receive payments on a weekly basis. Pharmacies submitting their claims once a month using the diskette based claiming model receive monthly payments. A small percentage of online claims in respect of individual prescriptions may not be paid as quickly as others until Medicare Australia has sighted the paper prescription. This generally occurs for high risk or high cost items.
10. Medicare Australia is not aware of any concerns from pharmacists about PBS Online not being in real time. PBS Online provides pharmacists with the capability to obtain an online assessment of claims relating to individual prescriptions at the time they are dispensing the medication, resulting in a greater certainty of payment and more frequent payments.

To address any concerns raised regarding how the PBS Online system operates, Medicare Australia is working closely with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and software vendors.