

Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 October 2009 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Authority Prescriptions

Question reference number: HS70

Senator: Adams

Type of question: *Written*

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 4 December 2009

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) How many requests for PBS authorities did Medicare Australia receive in 2008–09?
- b) How many requests did Medicare Australia reject?
- c) What were the reasons for those rejections?
- d) How much does it cost to administer the PBS authority system?

Answer:

- a) 6,414,544.
- b) 178,517.
- c) The reasons for rejection included:
 - not eligible—some authority items have restriction codes, which means the patient must have specific medical conditions to obtain the authority item. If they do not meet the criteria of the restriction, then the patient is not eligible;
 - too soon to request item again. Some authority medicines have restrictions limiting the frequency they can be prescribed. When another authority prescription for the same item has previously been approved and adequate supplies should still exist, the authority will be rejected;
 - authority not required. If a prescriber telephones Medicare Australia and requests an authority item the Medicare Australia service officer keys in the information while speaking with the prescriber. The prescriber may decide during the phone call not to proceed with the authority request so the service officer will reject the authority request;
 - missing information, for example, hospital provider number, gender, written application not filled in correctly, illegible patient details, item, form or strength not present on prescription, or lack of clinical information for reciprocal health care agreement patient;

- prescriber cancelled the request – service officers record the telephone call by keying the information on the authority system. When the prescriber cancels the request or does not want to proceed, then the service officer rejects the authority. This occurs when the prescriber has to answer authority questions and they realise the patient doesn't meet the criteria;
 - re-use of authority number – this occurs where the prescriber has already obtained an authority for an item in the past and tries to reuse the same authority approval number again; and
 - PBS Items no longer listed.
- d) The direct cost to administer the PBS authority system was approximately \$12 million in 2008–09.