

Health Insurance Amendment (Pathology Requests)

Bill 2010 [Provisions]

Minority Report by Coalition Senators

The Coalition Senators note the implementation concerns with this Bill. Whilst there is general support for patient choice, this needs to be balanced with the practicalities of providing high quality medical care, patient safety and the legal responsibilities of practitioners providing care.

Timeliness is of particular importance in relation to pathology services. There are a number of implementation concerns to ensure the accurate and timely dissemination of pathology results which still need to be addressed by the Government.

Evidence and submissions to the Committee demonstrate that there is variance in the range of services offered by pathology practices. Differences in laboratory technologies, the expertise of pathologists and laboratory teams, and the range of tests provided mean that there are circumstances where the needs of some patients are best met by certain pathology practices.

The degree of urgency by which results are required also greatly varies. Therefore, it may be appropriate in times of clinical need for referring practitioners to specify a provider for which they have clear and established lines of communication for results.

Many complex and chronic conditions require continual monitoring over extended periods of time. On the basis of evidence supplied to the Committee, there are instances where disease progression, remission and recurrence are most suitably monitored through consistent measurement series and reference range.

The Coalition Senators believe there are circumstances due to clinical urgency, a specific medical condition, or a requirement for consistent measurement series over time where the referring doctor should have an option to specify a pathology provider to remove ambiguity and improve patient safety.

Recommendation

The legislation be amended to allow referring doctors to specify a pathology provider in circumstances where there is a justifiable clinical need.

Senator Judith Adams
Senator for Western Australia
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