

Please consider this Civil Liberties Australia's supplementary response to your supplementary question:

Dear Mr Humphery

In your supplementary request, you say that we said, in one sentence in our submission: "The Senate Committee should be made aware that Medicare has an abysmal record of making financial claims as to potential savings; that prove illusory."

...and then YOU ASK for AN EXAMPLE:

The NEXT 3 SENTENCES of our ORIGINAL SUBMISSION said:

"CLA strongly recommends that, before making a decision based on Medicare's financial impact; claim, the Senate Committee requires Medicare to produce all similar claims made over the past 15 years as to proposed financial savings, and the true outcome five years into the proposed period of savings for each claim. "In particular, Medicare should be asked to explain the \$120m-odd of special funding requested in about the year 2000 for new IT equipment/systems that was, Medicare promised, going to save that much in four years, and then return positive funds to the Government in all future years. What has been the net result of that project, and why would the current financial estimate be any more accurate than that estimate was?"

End quote from original submission.

PLEASE NOTE: we have provided an example - THIS IS IT, ABOVE - in OUR ORIGINAL SUBMISSION. We also outlined that you and the Committee should, in our opinion, require Medicare to demonstrate their fiscal bona fides. (We did this many weeks ago - in plenty of time for you and the Committee to ask Medicare for the information BEFORE the PUBLIC HEARING).

If Medicare can provide the information, using the example we have supplied as well as other examples, Medicare should be delighted to be forthcoming. It would strengthen their arguments immensely if they have a proud track record of delivering project financial outcomes, on time, on budget.

If they cannot do so, or are unwilling to do so, or are 'too busy' to do so, the Committee could reasonably assume that they have "an abysmal record" of making "illusory" financial claims.

You, as Committee Secretary, should require of Medicare that they provide chapter and verse on the example given by us. The project example we gave was a separate allocation, formally reported in Medicare annual reports, and should be quite easy for Medicare to extract... a matter of 30-60 minutes work only. A further two or three examples of Medicare's project budget/delivery outcomes should be just as easy for them.

Please note, and draw to the Committee's attention, that:

- It is not up to CLA to prove anything. We are not asking the Parliament to change the law, and fundamentally alter the basis of auditing doctors, and dispense with the traditional privacy regime around patients' private health records. Medicare is the one that wants change, and it should prove its credibility - specifically, in this example, that it can be relied on for its budget projections and its delivery to specifications.
- We are a voluntary organisation which receives NO money from any of the federal, state or territory governments. We provide our considerable knowledge, expertise, experience and commitment to Senate inquiries at no cost to the Senate. We note that the Senators and the Senate Committee staff and Medicare staff ARE BEING PAID AT ALL TIMES...while they prepare and consider submissions, while the Senate Committee conducts hearings, and while preparing and providing and considering supplementary submissions.
- To appear by teleconference before the Senate Community Affairs Committee on proposed Medicare legislation, we interrupted a family holiday. We gave evidence from a lighthousekeeper's cottage at Cape Willoughby, on Kangaroo Island, a long way from our normal Canberra office. In the

circumstances, the demonstrated fact that one or more of the Senators, and the Senate Committee staff, have not even thoroughly read our original submission is galling, to say the least.

- We are less than impressed that the answer to your supplementary question is, in fact, in our original submission.

Bill Rowlings, CEO, Civil Liberties Australia  
(from Adelaide, while on holidays, 11 May 2009)  
PLEASE re-read our original submission before asking any further questions.