

Australian Government response to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration report into Item 16525 in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2007.

Introduction

On 18 June 2008, a motion was moved in the Senate by Senator Guy Barnett to disallow item 16525 in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the *Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2007*. On 16 September 2008 the Senate referred the subject of the motion for disallowance of item 16525 to the Finance and Public Administration Committee (the Committee) for inquiry. The Committee was asked to report on

- (a) the terms of item 16525 of part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2007;
- (b) the number of services receiving payments under this item and the cost of these payments;
- (c) the basis upon which payments of benefits are made under this item; and
- (d) the effects of disallowing this item.

The Committee tabled its report in the Senate on 13 November 2008. The Committee did not make any recommendation in relation to the disallowance of item 16525. However, it noted that concerns were expressed over the lack of data on terminations in Australia and made two recommendations aimed at improving the collection of perinatal and neonatal data.

Recommendation 1

2.52 The committee recommends that Australian Health Ministers' Conference ensure the prompt application of the Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Perinatal Mortality Classifications across all States and Territories.

Recommendation 2

2.53 The committee recommends that Australian Health Ministers' Conference secure an agreement with all jurisdictions to work towards providing complete and uniform data to the Perinatal National Minimum Data Set.

The Maternity Services Review

The Maternity Services Review was the first step in developing a comprehensive plan for maternity services into the future, and it considered issues relevant to the full range of maternity services which include pregnancy care, birthing, postnatal care and peer and social support for women in the perinatal period. *Improving Maternity Services in Australia: The Report of the Maternity Services Review (the Report)*, released in February 2009, provided recommendations for maternity reform. The first of these recommendations is that the Australian Government, in consultation with states and territories and key stakeholders, agree and implement arrangements for consistent, comprehensive national data collection, monitoring and review, for maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity.

Government Response

In response to the Report, the 2009-10 Improving Maternity Services Budget Package provides \$120.5 million over four years for a maternity reform package which includes funding for improved maternity data collections in Australia. The Australian Government has also sought commitment from the states and territories to develop a National Maternity Services Plan (the Plan). The Plan will provide further support to maternity reform through a strategic national and state framework to guide policy and program development to improve, coordinate and ensure greater access to maternity services in Australia, across a three to five year timeframe.