

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Subject : Health Insurance Commission Act 1973
Health Insurance Commission Regulations (Amendment)
1989 No. 55

ISSUED ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH

Subsection 8E(1) of the Health Insurance Commission Act 1973 (the Act) provides that the Health Insurance Commission (the Commission) shall perform such functions in relation to health insurance as are prescribed and such functions in relation to other matters relating to health as are prescribed.

Provider numbers are allocated to medical practitioners for purposes related to the administration of Medicare. Prescriber numbers are allocated to medical practitioners and participating dental practitioners for purposes related to the administration of the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. Both types of numbers have, to date, been allocated by officers of the Department of Community Services and Health.

It was considered, however, that the allocation of these numbers would, in the future, be more appropriately and effectively carried out by the Commission. The Health Insurance Commission Regulations therefore required amendment to prescribe such functions for the purposes of subsection 8E(1) of the Act. This was necessary for the Commission to legally perform them.

The Regulations, therefore, have effected the transfer of both of the above functions - the allocation of provider numbers to medical practitioners and the allocation of prescriber numbers to medical practitioners and participating dental practitioners - by prescribing each function for the purposes of subsection 8E(1).

The Regulations also prescribe, for the purposes of subsection 8E(1), as a function of the Commission, the processing of certain applications made for health program grants under subsection 45(1) of the Health Insurance Act 1973 (the HI Act). The applications which will henceforth be processed by the Commission will be those concerning the reimbursement of certain costs relating to the provision of radiation oncology services. Until now, the Department of Community Services and Health has processed all claims made under subsection 45(1) of the HI Act. It was considered, however, that the processing of the abovementioned claims would be more appropriately carried out by the Commission. The Regulations therefore provide for this to happen.

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