

**Parliamentary Question**  
**Hon Minister for Health and Medical Services**  
**Wednesday 14/03/2018**  
**Written Response**

**88/2018**      **Hon. Anare Vadei to ask the Minister for Health and Medical Services – Can the Minister inform the House how many people are benefiting from the Free Medical Scheme and give a breakdown of the same by division and district.**

**MADAM SPEAKER,**

**I thank the Honourable Member for this question.**

The Free Medicine Program is for **all** Fijians as it is accessible to eligible individuals regardless of their ethnicity, background or geographical location. The implementation of the program has been initiated by the FijiFirst Government through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in collaboration with **70 registered private pharmacies**. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, the Free Medicine Program was rolled out with an initial budget of \$8 million, with an initial list of 72 medicines on a voluntary basis.

**MADAM SPEAKER,**

I am pleased to say that since then the Free Medicine Program has continued to strengthen particularly through 2016 budget new fiscal year allocation, when the Minister for Finance had announced the continuation of Program with an increase in the

number of items from 72 to 142 thereby covering a wide range of medicines and 4 consumables products and with a financial boost in the Free Medicine Program budget to \$10million.

**MADAM SPEAKER,**

Currently, there are a total of **30,862** beneficiaries for the program. These are the individuals who have registered under the Free Medicine Program and they have been issued with Free Medicine Card that enables them to access the free medicines at any of the health facilities or private pharmacies.

**MADAM SPEAKER,**

Anybody with an income below \$20,000 qualifies for the Free Medicine Program. Those who are already on the social welfare assistance namely the Poverty Benefit Scheme program, the Care and Protection Allowance or the Social Pension Scheme, they **don't** have to register again as they by default fall into the category of earning less than \$20,000 per annum.

As a way of clarification, the maritime communities in the eastern division have **equal access** to the Free Medicine Program through the subdivisional hospitals and health centres where people visiting these health facilities are able to get those medicines listed in Free Medicine List. The registration forms are dispatched to all health facilities (including Eastern) nationwide and general public have access to these forms, and once filled these forms are processed.

**MADAM SPEAKER,**

Though there are no private pharmacies in the eastern division, to make use of the Free Medicine Cards, however, all those in



the maritime communities visiting the health facilities have equal access to the medicines through the public health pharmacies at **all** the health facilities (total of 52) based in the eastern division. As such the registration is **not** the only way to determine the total number of beneficiaries.

Of the total distribution value of **\$7million** for the Free Medicine Program Supplies per divisions from January 2017 until March 2018, free medicine distribution with total value of **\$400,000** has been received by the health facilities in the eastern division.

**MADAM SPEAKER,**

Even those beneficiaries who get a prescription from the private practitioner, they can still collect their medicines (those prescribed within the approved list of Free Medicine Program) from the counters of either the pharmacy within the hospitals, health centres or at the private pharmacies.

As a way forward to strengthen this program, the Ministry continues to enhance its internal process to intensify the reachout to the eligible Fijians to maximise on this program. As such the national registration drives continues throughout Fiji.

**Summary of Registration Only**

Division	Total
Northern	3774
Western	17202
Central	9886
Eastern	2
Grand Total	30862

**THANK YOU MADAM SPEAKER**