PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

11 June 2020

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Senator: Kristina Keneally

Question

Senator Keneally: The cost of an item is determined by supply and demand.
Ms Edwards: It does, so we were faced with a situation where there were enormous blockages in the normal supply chain. There were factories closed in China and so on that were usually open. There was enormous competition not just for PPE but also for things like ventilators, so we had to use all of the resources of the Government in an whole of Government way to go out there but with: what's the best value for money: what's the best way of proceeding: how are standards? That was a huge task but, yes, we paid more for PPE in that period then we would have paid this time last year and we don't apologise for that.
Senator Keneally: I am not suggesting you should: I was actually wondering if you could give this Committee a sense of that additional expenditure.
Ms Edwards: Yes, we can definitely do that. The challenge of all of this was to make sure that we acted as quickly as we possibly could and competed without paying too much and without compromising in any way on quality. That's why we had a huge team in the Department of Industry helping to drum up potential suppliers and we had our team working day and night, literally, to make sure we had contracts that were appropriately safeguarded for the Commonwealth without missing out on the opportunity to grab what was in very short supply.

Answer:

- The Government is providing up to $3.3 billion to secure essential additional PPE stocks and other medical equipment and supplies along with antibiotics and antivirals to help in preventing the transmission of COVID-19.
- Details of PPE purchasing were provided in camera and should not be published or circulated beyond the confidential committee arrangements.