

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015, 25 February 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000137

OUTCOME: 0 - Whole of Portfolio

Topic: Administration of the Department

Type of Question Written Question on Notice

Senator: McLucas, Jan

Question:

What actions is the Department undertaking to implement the findings of the APSC's Capability Review, in particular the findings that:

- a) The SES report limited opportunities for interaction with peers, many only interacting with members of the Executive within their direct reporting lines.
- b) The department lacks a high level, long-term organisational strategy, required to deliver on the Government's agenda, effect change and keep pace with customer demands and the changing global health landscape.
- c) "Internal and external interviewees commented on the department's centralised and elevated approach to decision making, which they identified was the product of a command-and control leadership style and a risk-averse culture... employees and a number of external stakeholders observed it has disempowered the SES

The continuous focus on risk at micro-level is in contrast to the department's apparent lack of management of major and ongoing risks—such as the ICT environment and the occupational health and safety of its employees. These risk blind spots are of serious concern, and the review team encourages the department to act immediately to address them.

Answer:

The Department has nominated a Deputy Secretary to sponsor the newly established Health Capability Programme addressing the findings of the Review, and established an Organisational Capability Team to facilitate that work.

- a) Two all-SES events have occurred since the report was received. In addition, 60 SES have formal collaborative roles with the Health Capability Programme which has enabled them to interact across work areas.
- b) As part of the Programme, the Department is developing a Strategic Intent 2015 – 2019 to improve our ability to deliver the Government's agenda now and into the future.
- c) The Health Capability Programme incorporates work to address the 'centralised and elevated approach to decision-making' as well as developing an approach that manages risks within defined tolerances.
ICT risks and occupational health and safety risks are constantly monitored and actions taken to address emerging risks. At the same time, further work is being carried out through the Health Capability Programme to better understand the issues affecting our people.