

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-014

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Di Natale

Question:

Is the strategy still active, or is it defunct? What status does it have? If it is inactive, what are the reasons for that?

Answer:

The 2003 Strategy for Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance in Australia was never permanently deactivated. The Commonwealth's response to antimicrobial resistance has evolved and consists of support for a number of initiatives. Information on these initiatives is contained in the response to Senator Di Natale's question without notice on 30 October 2012 regarding antimicrobial resistance (attached).

SENATE QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

DATE ASKED: Tuesday, 30 October 2012

Senator Di Natale asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing in the Senate on, Tuesday, 30 October 2012:

The Four Corners program last night broadcast what those of us with a health background have known for some years, and that is that the threat to global health posed by superbugs and antibiotic resistance is a severe and urgent threat. In a few short years, minor infections and routine surgery could become life-threatening conditions. What is the Government doing to prepare Australia for the worsening problem of resistance and to safeguard the future health of Australians?

Senator Ludwig – The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable Senator's question:

Since July 2011, the Department of Health and Ageing has worked with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), National Prescribing Service (NPS) and expert professional groups to develop a national approach to reducing the risk of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). In response to this work, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has established a standing committee to bring together relevant national bodies. This new committee is the Antimicrobial Resistance Standing Committee (AMRSC). The role of AMRSC is to advise, provide expert advice and assistance to the AHPPC on matters relating to AMR.

The department has continued to support:

- The Australian Group on Antimicrobial Resistance, which is a national network of laboratories that undertake surveys of resistant organisms isolated from humans;
- The National Antimicrobial Utilisation Surveillance Program, managed by the South Australia Department of Health, collects data on inpatient antibiotic usage and trends at a national and individual hospital level. These data can be used to develop targeted strategies to minimise development of antimicrobial resistance in the hospital setting.

The department also supports the ACSQHC's Healthcare Associated Infections Prevention Program which aims to reduce the incidence of antimicrobial resistance through:

- A National Hand Hygiene Campaign;
- Building clinician capacity, a series of online education modules in the prevention of health associated infection, undertaken by thousands of Australian health care workers;
- Antimicrobial stewardship resources and strategies;

- Revision of the National Infection Control Guidelines; and
- Implementation of a targeted National Surveillance System.

The ACSQHC has also released the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards which will be effective January 2013, which will require public hospitals and day procedure services in Australia to be accredited on prevention and control of healthcare associated infections. These Standards include Standard number 3, which will require hospitals to implement antimicrobial stewardship, and infection prevention and control strategies.