

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO**

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

**Question: E12-221**

**OUTCOME 1: Population Health**

**Topic: ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE**

**Type of Question: Written Question on Notice**

**Number of pages: 3**

**Senator: Senator Di Natale**

**Question:**

At page 24 of Hansard, Supplementary Senate Estimates Community Affairs Committee, Wednesday, 17 October 2012, Ms Halton asserted that "people's lack of understanding about the current frameworks is something quickly we clearly have to do something about."

- a) Please describe in detail the "current frameworks" for dealing with antimicrobial resistance referred to, including the role of the Department of Health and Aging, its agencies, and the respective roles of all other Federal Government agencies.
- b) What steps is the Department taking to increase the public's understanding of these frameworks? Why does the Department see it as important that the public has an understanding of these frameworks?

**Answer:**

- a) The Department of Health and Ageing, together with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and its related agencies, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), and the Department portfolio agencies and independent bodies, are undertaking a significant amount of work on antimicrobial resistance.

The Department and its related agencies support surveillance, research and stewardship in relation to antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic use in humans. DAFF and its related agencies carry out these roles in relation to antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic use in animals. AusAID supports regional partners and Governments to strengthen health care systems, and prevent the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance. The Secretary of the Department has written to DAFF to ensure overall governance and coordination of this work.

Since July 2011, the Department 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 humans. 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; and
- The National Antimicrobial Utilisation Surveillance Program, managed by the South Australia Department of Health, which collects data on inpatient antibiotic usage and trends at a national and individual hospital level representing approximately 50 per cent of tertiary referral hospital beds. 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 developed and released the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards which, effective January 2013, 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 accredit hospitals on their governance and systems to prevent and control healthcare associated infections, antimicrobial stewardship, and infection prevention and control strategies.

NHMRC is Australia's peak body for supporting health and medical research. NHMRC continues to fund a significant program of Australian research into antimicrobial and antibiotic resistance, totaling more than \$44 million between 2000 and 2011.

NPS has been funded by the Australian Government since 1998 to assist prescribers, pharmacists and patients in the quality use of medicines. The NPS provides support to doctors to assist their clinical management decisions and to improve quality prescribing and use of medicines, including substantial resources on antibiotic resistance.

NPS awareness campaigns are targeted, incorporate evidence-based messages and have shown high levels of interest by both consumers and health professionals. The Australian Government continues to actively support its strong track record in facilitating the implementation of quality use of medicines programs.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration requires sponsors of antibacterial medicinal products for human use to provide antimicrobial resistance risk assessments in their initial registration applications or applications to extend the use of the registered products. This has been undertaken since 2001.

AusAID supports the Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) to strengthen control of Tuberculosis (TB). AusAID has committed an initial \$11 million over four years to support the Government of PNG to strengthen control of TB in Western Province. AusAID's support is leading to better detection and treatment of TB in the Western Province of PNG. The Government of PNG's approach to managing TB in Western Province has been endorsed by the World Health Organization. This approach provides evidence-based treatment of TB in PNG, and will manage the risk of drug-resistant TB spreading to Australia.

- b) The Department and its related agencies undertake significant work to inform the public of activities regarding antimicrobial resistance

The Department supports the NPS, which provides independent, evidence based information about medicines and is a trusted source for consumers and health professionals to access when seeking quality use of medicines information. NPS awareness campaigns are well targeted, incorporate evidence-based messages and have shown high levels of interest shown by both consumers and health professionals. The NPS provides useful tools and information about antimicrobial resistance and appropriate antibiotic use through NPS Medicine Wise. The NPS supports Antibiotic Awareness Week, a global health initiative to reduce the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

The Department, together with state and territory governments, supports the ACSQHC which has released the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (Standards). The Standards will, effective January 2013, require public hospitals and day procedure services in Australia to be accredited on prevention and control of healthcare associated infections. The Standards include Standard 2: Partnering With Consumers, which requires health services to communicate with consumers and/or carers with information that is meaningful and relevant on the health care organisation's safety and quality performance.