

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

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

Question: E12-233

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: ORGAN DONATION RATES

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Di Natale

Question:

In relation to Additional Estimates Question on Notice number E12- 401, organ donation rates have continued to decline in 2012 in NSW:

- a) Has the Authority looked at the differences in the hospital practices between the higher performing States and NSW?
- b) Has the Authority identified any differences?
- c) Is the Authority suggesting that the multicultural population in NSW is that different to other better performing States?

Answer:

The premise on which the question is based, that "organ donation rates have continued to decline in 2012 in NSW", is incorrect. The year to date November 2012 outcome for New South Wales is 79 deceased organ donors. This represents an 11 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2011 (71 donors).

- a) Yes. The Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority (AOTDTA), in conjunction with the State Medical Directors and representatives of state and territory health departments, routinely undertakes analysis of hospital performance and practices at the national, jurisdictional and hospital levels to identify any factors contributing to variation in donation outcomes across jurisdictions.
- b) Yes. Of particular note is the impact of the New South Wales Road and Maritime Safety (RMS) organ donor register which has 30 per cent of objections to donation registered when compared to 0.35 per cent on the Australian Organ Donor Register. It is widely considered that this disproportionate number of objections to donation has occurred as a result of the environment within which this information is sought. The information is sought at the time of renewal of a driver's licence, in circumstances where no donation information is provided other than a tick box which compels an

individual to indicate only 'yes' or 'no'. It is understood that in these circumstances, individuals default to 'no' when compelled to make an uninformed choice. This high number of objections to donation was reinforced by the terms of the NSW *Human Tissue Act 1983* which prohibited authorised individuals from overriding the written wishes of a deceased person.

These issues were identified as part of the NSW Government's 2012 plan, Increasing organ donation in NSW. The RMS organ donor register will be decommissioned in the near future and the NSW *Human Tissue Act 1983* has been amended to allow for authorised persons to provide more recent advice as to the wishes of a potential donor than those provided on a register. This allows therefore hospital-based staff to approach these families where in the past this has been prohibited.

In addition, as is occurring in all jurisdictions, New South Wales DonateLife staff and other critical care clinicians are taking part in the national professional education program (PEP) which includes specific training on conducting family donation conversations.

- c) No. There are large multicultural populations across Australia and the NSW population mix is no different to that of other large jurisdictions. The AOTDTA, through extensive community awareness research, has identified that there are barriers to decision-making and family discussion about organ and tissue donation among culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Through research and consultation, those groups that were identified to most benefit from targeted community engagement addressing particular barriers were people of Eastern Orthodox, Buddhist, Islamic and Hindu faiths and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with a particular focus on the priority groups identified, is a strategic priority in 2011-12 and continues into 2012-13. Under the leadership of the AOTDTA, a cohesive, targeted, national culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communication plan will be implemented across all jurisdictions, including New South Wales. Through its Community Awareness Grants program the AOTDTA has partnered with a range of CALD organisations and produced in-language and culturally appropriate resources, produced by or in consultation with community and religious members, which are published on the DonateLife website.