

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 21 October 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000768

OUTCOME: 9 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: Lyme Disease

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

Dr Lum spoke in the Senate Estimates Hearing about “classical Lyme disease”.

- a) Can Dr Lum please clarify what he means by this term?
- b) Has the Department of Health (DoH)’s primary focus to date been on proving or disproving the presence of a particular organism in Australia or on trying to understand the nature and causes of the condition that presents like Lyme disease and is affecting Australian patients?

Answer:

Dr Lum describes classical Lyme disease as an acute bacterial infection caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi* sensu lato that occurs after being bitten by a competent tick vector. A description of classical Lyme disease can be found in the Australian guideline on the diagnosis of overseas acquired Lyme Disease/Borreliosis <http://www.health.gov.au/lyme-disease#oz-guidelines>

The Department’s primary concern is the patients who are experiencing multiple nonspecific chronic debilitating symptoms. Part of the Department’s interest is ensuring that it works with sound medical and scientific evidence while remaining engaged with and understanding the concerns of the patient community.

