



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

File Number: 11/9772#14

5 July 2011

Senator Mark Bishop
Chair
Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Bishop

I write to correct evidence given to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Additional Estimates hearing on 1 June 2011.

The corrected evidence addresses an answer provided to Senator Kroger in response to a question she asked about the provision of potassium iodine tablets to Australians in Japan by Government officials.

Mr Suckling (First Assistant Secretary, Consular, Public Diplomacy and Parliamentary Affairs Division, DFAT) stated (page **77**, lines **7 and 8**) that 'As a contingency, on 15 and 16 March we sent 2,200 iodine packages up to the Tokyo embassy, but they were never distributed.'

This statement is incorrect. The answer should read; 'The Australian Embassy in Tokyo gave one package of iodine to an Australian citizen who was returning to their home in the north of Japan. This package was taken from the consignment of 2,200 sent to the Embassy from Australia. The Embassy in Tokyo currently holds 2,199 packages of iodine.'


'In addition to the distribution of this one package of iodine, the team of Australian consular officials sent to Sendai separately gave out 33 iodine packages to Australians in the north of the country.'

'These packages were given to Australian officials by a British consular team as it departed Sendai. Under instructions from Canberra, the Australian consular team in Sendai distributed all 33 packages to Australians and their spouses/dependents who were in the area.'

'The general locations in which the tablets were given out were Kamaishi in Iwate Prefecture, Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture and Aizuwakamatsu in Fukushima Prefecture (but outside 80km precautionary zone).'

'The Sendai consular team provided written instructions to Australians receiving this iodine. This included warnings about the possible side-effects of taking the medicine and guidance about how to take the iodine, underlining that the tablets were not to be taken unless and until official advice to do so was given by Australian or Japanese authorities.'

Yours sincerely

Simon Merrifield 
Assistant Secretary
Parliamentary and Media Branch