

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(313) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Cash asked:

1) Have any communicable diseases been detected in any of the detention facilities on Christmas Island? If yes, what are they and how have they been managed? Have any people with treated or untreated communicable diseases been transported to the mainland? If so, how were they transported?

2) What are the disease management protocols on Christmas Island?

Answer:

1a) A communicable disease is an infectious disease that is transmissible (from person to person) by direct contact with an affected individual or the individual's discharges, or by indirect means (by a vector). Some communicable diseases require notification.

A total of 121 cases of notifiable communicable diseases have been detected in the detainee population on Christmas Island in the period 1 July 2010 to 4 February 2011.

It should be noted that the incidence of these communicable diseases among the IMA population is very low, despite high numbers of arrivals.

1 b) Notifiable communicable diseases detected were: Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Chlamydia, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Shingles and Pertussis (Whooping Cough).

Where an intervention is indicated for an identified communicable disease, such as treatment of the individual, vaccination of the patient or others, or treatment of contacts, this is provided. Such interventions are consistent with recommended treatment guidelines provided by professional bodies, such as the Centre of Disease Control (CDC) or Specialist Colleges.

1 c) A large percentage of the abovementioned 121 cases would have been transported to the mainland, following an appropriate treatment regime.

There is minimal risk posed to the community by these cases, as the Department ensures clients adhere strictly to medically advised treatment procedures. Protecting the health of people in immigration detention and the broader Australian community is the Department's highest priority.

1 d) Transport is by commercial or chartered aircraft in the case of a general or non-urgent transfer, and by air ambulance or the Royal Flying Doctor Service in the case of an urgent/emergency transfer.

Clients with identified active airborne communicable diseases would not be transferred prior to completion of treatment, unless tertiary hospital services were required, in which case they would be transferred by air ambulance or the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

2) The Health Service Provider has established disease management protocols for communicable diseases, which are based on the Australian Centre for Disease Control Guidelines.

In addition, the relevant West Australian State Health Authority is notified whenever a person in detention on Christmas Island is detected as having a notifiable communicable disease.