

## **QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

### **BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 May 2013**

#### **IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO**

#### **(BE13/0171) PROGRAM – 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management**

Senator Cash (L&CA 99-100) asked:

Senator CASH: Thank you. The other issue, while Mr Douglas is trying to find the information, is that a matter has been raised with me in relation to the availability of non-PBS drugs for those within the detention networks—obviously drugs that are not on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Asylum seekers are entitled or able to get drugs prescribed to them—for example, an antidepressant. Are they entitled to get drugs prescribed to them that are not on the PBS?

Mr Douglas: No.

Senator CASH: You are 100 per cent sure?

Mr Douglas: I am not a medical expert, but my understanding of the contract is that they only have the ability to prescribe medications that are on the PBS.

Senator CASH: Could you confirm that for me, please.

Mr Douglas: I will confirm that for you. The answer I will be seeking to confirm is that no medications not on the PBS have been prescribed.

Senator CASH: That is actually not the question I asked, but could you provide that information as well.

Mr Douglas: It is the assurance I am looking to give you, but I will pick up the question you asked.

Senator CASH: What I would also like is: is there the ability to provide to asylum seekers drugs that are not on the PBS?

Mr Douglas: I am fairly confident that that is the case, but I will take it on notice to confirm it for you.

*Answer:*

The *Health Services Contract* does not specify whether non-PBS medications may be prescribed. International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) advises that people are only prescribed non-PBS medications under exceptional clinical circumstances and generally in consultation with appropriate specialist providers. An example of this would be clients requiring specific chemotherapeutic agents.