

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(334) 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? What are they and how have they been managed?
- (2) Have any people with treated or untreated communicable diseases been transported to the mainland? How [many and when]?
- (3) What are the disease management protocols on Christmas Island?

Answer:

(1) The table below outlines the numbers and types of notifiable communicable diseases that have been detected in people in immigration detention on Christmas Island from 1 July – 19 October 2010.

Tuberculosis	Hepatitis B	Hepatitis C	Chlamydia	Syphilis	Gonorrhoea	Shingles	Pertussis	Total
3	4	3	1	13	1	2	1	28

The incidence and prevalence of communicable diseases are generally representative of the populations that the people have come from, or the country(s) they have transited through before arriving in Australia (e.g. Indonesia).

People with communicable diseases are managed in accordance with the protocols described in (3) below.

(2) There has been one identified case since 1 July 2010 where a person who had been in immigration detention on Christmas Island for six months, and who was passed as 'fit to fly', was transferred to Northern Immigration Detention Centre (NIDC) in August 2010. Five weeks after arriving at NIDC, he presented to the medical centre with a persistent cough that was diagnosed as being active tuberculosis. The Department's contracted Detention Health Services Provider has advised that some cases of TB are 'latent' and not picked up on screening, only to surface when a client has another illness or is physically "run down". This appears to have happened in this case.

(3) Depending on how a person arrives on Christmas Island, either a Customs medical officer or a health professional from the Department's contracted Detention Health Services Provider conducts a public health screening assessment for communicable diseases such as TB and typhoid, before, or upon, arrival at Christmas Island.

All people entering immigration detention receive a Health Induction Assessment (HIA) within 72 hours. As part of the HIA, people are screened for pre-existing medical conditions including communicable diseases. Systems are in place to separate new arrivals from the rest of the immigration detention population until the HIA process is complete. The majority of communicable diseases identified among people in immigration detention are pre-existing conditions identified during the HIA process.

As part of ongoing medical care, all people in immigration detention are, as appropriate, vaccinated in accordance with Australian Immunisation Standards and educated about disease control methods such as hand washing and hygiene.

Where a person entering immigration detention is identified with a notifiable communicable disease, the Detention Health Services Provider seeks advice from the Western Australia Department of Health's Communicable Disease Control Directorate. Based on this advice, people who are suspected of having a notifiable communicable disease such as tuberculosis are placed into medical quarantine until their condition is confirmed, and an appropriate treatment plan is established.

The health of people in immigration detention is also important from an occupational health and safety perspective for staff working in this environment. The Department makes all efforts to protect the health of people working in the immigration detention environment by providing access to vaccinations and preventative education.