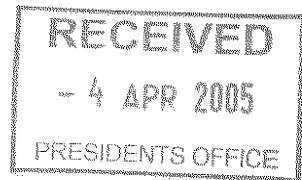




THE HON TONY ABBOTT MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING
Leader of the House of Representatives



Senator the Hon Paul Calvert
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr President

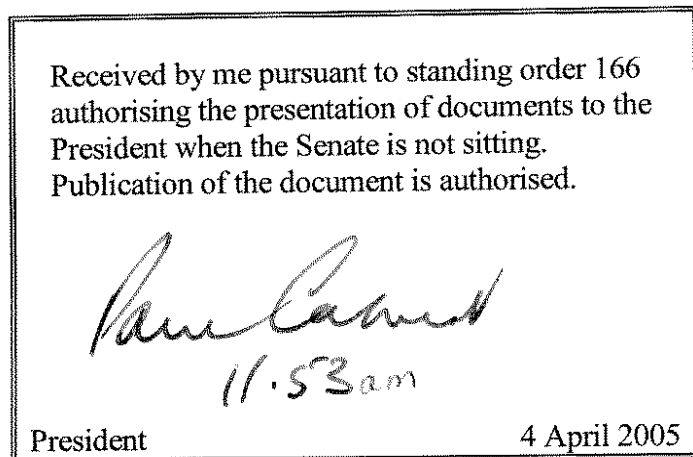
Pursuant to standing order 166, relating to the presentation of documents when the Senate is not sitting, I present to you the Australian Government Response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Report on Hepatitis C and the Blood Supply in Australia.

The Government's response was announced by media release on 30 August 2004.

Yours sincerely

TONY ABBOTT

31 MAR 2005



**Senate Community Affairs References
Committee**

**Report on Hepatitis C and the Blood
Supply in Australia**

Australian Government Response

Senate Community Affairs References Committee Report on Hepatitis C and the Blood Supply in Australia.

Australian Government Response

Recommendation 1

That the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council consider the introduction of mandatory reporting to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service by State and Territory health authorities of instances where a person is diagnosed with hepatitis C and it is judged that the infection was contracted through the blood supply.

Response

The Australian Government will refer recommendation 1 to State and Territory Governments for consideration.

Recommendation 2

That, in order to ensure the safety of patients and continued confidence in the blood supply, the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care and the National Blood Authority implement, as a matter of priority, a national haemovigilance system.

Response

The Australian Government will discuss recommendation 2 with State and Territory Governments.

Recommendation 3

That the Commonwealth review the criteria for access to S100 drugs for those people suffering from hepatitis C to provide for greater access.

Response

The Australian Government has asked the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee to conduct a review of access to drugs to treat hepatitis C.

Recommendation 4

That the recommendations relating to the use of recombinant Factor VIII and Factor IX contained in the Report of the Working Party on the Supply and Use of Factor VIII and Factor IX in Australia be implemented as a matter of priority.

Response

The Australian Government has agreed to fund access to recombinant clotting factors for haemophilia patients. A small number will not be able to use recombinant products and will continue to be provided with plasma-derived clotting factors. The Government is providing ongoing funding of \$80.7 million over four years, to be supplemented by the State and Territory Governments under the National Blood Agreement.

Recommendation 5

That the Commonwealth fund a national hepatitis C awareness campaign to increase the public's knowledge of hepatitis C and that such a campaign emphasise all the means by which the infection may be acquired and the need for early testing and treatment.

Response

The Australian Government will consider a public awareness campaign in the context of finalising the National Hepatitis C Strategy 2005-2008.

Recommendation 6

That a national post-transfusion hepatitis C committee be established as a priority with the purpose of:

- formulating, coordinating and delivering an apology to those who have acquired hepatitis C through the blood supply;
- establishing an effective Lookback program; and
- improving service delivery through a case management approach that ensures that appropriate medical, counselling and welfare services are provided, sensitive to the needs of people who have acquired hepatitis C through blood and blood products.

That membership of the committee include representatives of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, representatives of organisations which support people with hepatitis C acquired through the blood supply and individuals who have acquired hepatitis C through the blood supply.

That the committee establish and manage a fund to provide financial assistance for costs not covered through existing services, which could include the costs of visits and transport to general practitioners, prescribed medication and surgical aids, dental, aural, optical, physiotherapy and chiropody treatments, home care and/or home help, and alternative medical treatments, to the people who have acquired hepatitis C through blood and blood products.

That the committee, and the fund it establishes, be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

Response

The Australian Government will discuss recommendation 6 with State and Territory Governments.

URL:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/hepatitis+C-2>