

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2013 - 2014, 26 February 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000229

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Publication Process

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: McLucas Jan

Question:

What is the process for release of AIHW reports? Are there any reports outstanding from the 2013-14 year? Are there any reports that have been delayed since September 2013? What is the cause of this delay?

Answer:

Release dates for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reports are tentatively scheduled early in a report's development process. This approach supports workload planning and forecasting. Release dates are not deemed 'confirmed' until the final report is ready for publication. At this point the release is communicated publicly through the AIHW website.

A large number of reports are scheduled to be published before the end of 2013–14. Generally the AIHW experiences peaks in published output during November/December and June each year. This cyclical load is typical for AIHW outputs, especially those linked to our externally funded work program. Our contracted outputs are generally developed on financial year cycles, resulting in increased output at the end of contract periods.

During the period September 2013 to 31 December 2013, 29 reports have had a delay to their scheduled release of more than 2 weeks. Ten of these reports have been released on a revised date and the remaining 19 have not yet been released. For the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014, 32 reports are awaiting publication.

Delays to AIHW outputs are generally caused by delays in data provision to the AIHW or the resupply of data by information providers. In addition, in consultation with funders, changes are frequently made to the scope of projects while they are in progress. These changes generally accommodate new data availability or additional consultation or review processes and can often result in outputs taking longer to deliver than initially anticipated.

AIHW report outputs are generally scheduled with ambitious timeframes. This can drive productivity and is supported by a flexible approach to the release of AIHW reports.

A business transformation initiative, including implementation of a customised project management system for the AIHW during 2013–14, will improve the timeliness of AIHW reports, along with aiding the quality and efficiency of our operations. Over time, we expect our management of reports and data processing to improve, with associated savings in time and resources.