

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-013

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: Global Legally Binding Instrument on Mercury

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Heffernan

Question:

- a) Can the Department provide the Departmental Plan that outlines the process to test indigenous Australians for mercury contamination, on a national scale? If not, why not, please provide details?
- b) Can the Department provide the budget for the next 10 years for actions to make sure that indigenous communities are not living in mercury contaminated areas, are not eating mercury contaminated foods, and are not drinking mercury and/or arsenic contaminated water? If not, why not, please provide details.

Answer:

- a) b)
The Department of Health and Ageing provides advice to assist the negotiations of the *Global Legally Binding Instrument on Mercury* (the mercury treaty) when requested by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. The negotiating position has been developed through a Whole-of-Government approach to ensure that Australia's interests, including economic, environmental and human health interests are taken into account. Currently, the mercury treaty is being developed through negotiations and no agreement has been reached. Thus, the Department is not in a position to determine implementation obligations, budget estimations, training needs or the need for amendments to existing Australian health standards, until the outcome of the international negotiation is known.