

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 -035

OUTCOME 0: Whole of Portfolio

Topic: Infectious Disease and Immigration

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

Apparently DIAC expressed 'some concerns' about the comprehensiveness of the advice provided by DoHA. What was that about, what was it specifically in relation to and what was DoHA's response to such criticism?

(Document Reference)

DIAC indicated that there had also been some concerns raised internally about the comprehensiveness of the advice provided by DoHA – with DIAC seeking additional information where required so that it is able to ensure transparency and develop “evidence-based policy”. For example, DIAC's Chief Medical Officer has sought additional information in the context of advice about prejudice of access issues (to be discussed at the next FAS level meeting). Additional information will also be sought shortly in relation to the practice of charging for TB treatment, given concerns that no national approach is in place in terms of TB treatment.

Answer:

The specific query on which the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) was seeking additional information was in relation to “prejudice to access” for knee and hip joint replacements and dialysis. The concept of “prejudice to access” refers to the relatively small number of health products and services that are in systemically short supply in Australia, to the extent that admitting new entrants to Australia with requirements for these products and services would result in the risk of limiting access by Australians. The Department of Health and Ageing provides advice on products and services in short supply to DIAC, who are responsible for maintaining the “prejudice to access” list. In response to these DIAC concerns, the Department investigated further and provided a detailed response to the specific query in March 2011.