

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: E12-238

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: National Health Priority Areas

Type of Question: Written

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Di Natale

Question:

What criteria does the Department apply to assess proposals for screening programs? For example, how would the Department assess a proposal to introduce a national vascular check in Australia, similar to the UK's National Health Service Check?

Answer:

In determining whether there is sufficient evidence to establish an organised screening program, the Australian Government has developed a *Population Based Screening Framework* (the Framework), based on the World Health Organization screening principles, to provide guidance for decision makers when considering potential population based screening programs in Australia.

Applications for potential screening programs are considered by the Screening Subcommittee of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council against the Framework's criteria.

There is a need for a strong evidence base to inform decisions about screening programs, including evidence of the safety, reproducibility and accuracy of the screening test, cost effectiveness and efficacy of the treatment.

A screening program must offer more benefit than harm to the target population of asymptomatic people.

A copy of the Framework is available on the Department's cancer screening website at www.cancerscreening.gov.au. A summary of the key principles is provided at Attachment A.