

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: E12-276

OUTCOME 14: Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: Antimicrobial Resistance

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

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Senator: Senator Di Natale

Question:

Does the department support the recommendations of the 1998 Joint Expert technical Advisory Committee on Antibiotic Resistance (JETACAR) report? If not why not, when was the decision made not to support the report and what evidence and strategy now underpins the department's response to antimicrobial resistance?

Answer:

The Commonwealth Government Response to the JETACAR report was released by the former Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Dr Wooldridge MP and the then Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, the Hon Warren Truss MP on 12 October 2000. The Commonwealth Government's Response was generally supportive of the JETACAR recommendations.

Since July 2011, the Department of Health and Ageing has worked with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), National Prescribing Service (NPS) and expert professional groups to develop a national approach to reducing the risk of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). In response to this work, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has established a standing committee to bring together relevant national bodies. This new committee is the Antimicrobial Resistance Standing Committee (AMRSC). The role of AMRSC is to advise, provide expert advice and assistance to the AHPPC on matters relating to AMR.

The Department has continued to support AMR related activities:

- The Australian Group on Antimicrobial Resistance is a national network of laboratories that undertake surveys of resistant organisms isolated from humans;
- The National Antimicrobial Utilisation Surveillance Program, managed by the South Australia Department of Health, collects data on inpatient antibiotic usage and trends at a national and individual hospital level. These data can be used to develop targeted strategies to minimise development of antimicrobial resistance in the hospital setting.

The Department also supports activities undertaken by the ACSQHC:

- The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Healthcare (ACSQHC) has also supported activities under its Healthcare Associated Infections Prevention Program which aims to reduce the incidence of antimicrobial resistance through:
- A National Hand Hygiene Initiative has been set up to develop a national hand hygiene culture-change program that will standardise hand hygiene practice and placement of alcohol-based hand rub in every Australian hospital;
- The Building Clinician Capacity Initiative which aims to address skill or knowledge-based gaps in infection control professions across healthcare settings;
- The National Antimicrobial Stewardship Initiative that supports the optimisation of antibiotic use in improving patient outcomes and reducing the incidence of AMR;
- Revision and implementation of the National Infection Control Guidelines; and
- Implementation of the National Surveillance Initiative which seeks to explore options for a national surveillance system to monitor healthcare acquired infections and provide timely feedback to jurisdictions and clinicians.