

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: E12-340

OUTCOME 13: Acute Care

Topic: Organ donation rates in Australia

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

Based on the current available international data, Australia is ranked 24th in the world for deceased organ donation for transplantation. (Source: Council of Europe Transplant Newsletter, September 2011). Given that the federal funding package was announced and the Organ and Tissue Authority formed to establish Australia as a world leader in organ donation for transplantation, has the government audited the poor performance of the program? Has it identified the reasons for the poor performance, given the money that has been made available and spent to date, and the steps or persons and spend needed to fix it?

Answer:

Donations and Transplantation Rates

Australia's progress equals or betters growth in leading countries after the first two full year's implementation of a national reform agenda. Australia's performance at the same stage in its reform agenda compares favourably with Spain, UK and Portugal and considerably exceeds Croatia.

At the end of 2010 the WHO Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation ranked Australia as 24th from 62 selected countries for deceased donors per million population (dpmp). This was an improvement from 28th in 2009. The ranking for 2011 has yet to be released.

Though international comparators have some utility it is problematic to compare different countries given different clinical practice, health infrastructure and community attitudes; for example, Spain's 32.0 dpmp rate in 2010 appears to be driven by donations from older cohorts than that which occurs in Australia, with potential implications for transplant outcomes.

In 2010, the first full year of implementation, Australia achieved what was then its highest number of deceased organ donations since records began (309). The increase was substantial, 25per cent increase on the 2009 outcome (247 deceased donors). In 2011, the number of donors increased by a further 9per cent to a record 337.

In 2011, Australia had a donation rate of 14.9 dpmp. This result represents an 8per cent increase (1.1dpmp) on the 2010 outcome of 13.8 dpmp and a 32per cent increase over the 2009 outcome of 11.3 dpmp.

The increase in organ donations resulted in a record 931 lifesaving transplants in 2010. In 2011 there were 1001 lifesaving transplants which is a 25per cent increase on the 2009 outcome of 799.

Audit of Performance

On 29 March 2011, the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, the Hon Catherine King MP, announced an independent Mid-Point Implementation Review of the Australian Government's national reforms to improve organ and tissue donation. The review was undertaken by an independent reviewer, Australian Healthcare Associates, a leading consultancy firm in the health and community care sector.

While the report found that there has been solid progress to date and that this progress equals or betters progress seen in other nations at an equivalent stage in the reform journey, it suggested opportunities for the way forward including focus on strengthening support for clinical improvement and sharing of knowledge across the hospital network.

The DonateLife Network strategic priorities for 2011-12 and now in 2012-13 complement the opportunities for improvement focusing on enhancements to the collection of hospital death audit data and use of that information to provide feedback at the hospital level to improve performance.