



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

10 November 2016

Mr David Sullivan
Secretary
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sullivan

I wish to correct my answer to Senator Claire Moore's question regarding Australia's funding for polio eradication and routine immunisation at the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing on 20 October 2016. The discussion is referenced on page 87 of the proof Hansard (attached).

My testimony references an announcement by the Prime Minister on Australia's contribution to polio eradication to support both polio and broader immunization systems. The original announcement on Australia's support for polio eradication was made by the Foreign Minister, not the Prime Minister. The announcement was via a Media Release issued on 1 June 2014 (attached).

I would appreciate if you could pass on to the Committee my sincere apology for providing an inaccurate response.

Yours sincerely

Blair Exell
First Assistant Secretary
Development Policy Division

processes. We assured ourselves that they were being treated in accordance with Malaysian legal processes and laws.

Senator MOORE: Are there costs involved with that?

Mr Philp: There are the costs involved of deploying our consular officers, but it is the same kinds of costs that we offer in the provision of consular assistance to any other Australians.

Senator MOORE: Have any of the Australians in question been asked to repay any costs?

Mr Philp: No. That is not our normal practice.

Senator MOORE: And that is not a standard practice in any case?

Mr Philp: That is not a standard practice. We offer a high standard of consular assistance to Australians partly because we cannot be sure of being able to provide exactly the same level everywhere in the world. In a country like Chad, we cannot. So we cannot meet key service indicators. We do what we can wherever we have consular cases.

Senator MOORE: And have any of the nine Australians offered to pay some costs?

Mr Philp: Not that I am aware of.

Senator MOORE: Is that a practice that occurs?

Mr Philp: That people offer to pay costs? I imagine it happens from time to time, but we do not accept it. It is not something we do.

Senator MOORE: Thank you. I have some more questions on aid or international development.

CHAIR: I know Senator Rhiannon has some questions in the aid space.

Senator RHIANNON: It is a bit of a grey area with aid these days. I am happy to defer.

CHAIR: Continue on then, Senator Moore.

Senator MOORE: Thank you very much. In fact, I have some questions that Senator Rhiannon actually has a question on notice on. It is a shared thing. It is around funding for polio. I know that was mentioned at the last round of estimates. There was a question on notice submitted by Senator Rhiannon. I am trying to get my head around exactly what the meaning of the response is.

Mr McDonald: Yes. I can start off helping.

Senator MOORE: I am wanting to find the question. It spells it out. It was a question about how you are funding polio and the process around eradicating polio across the world. The receipt of the question on notice says that \$15 million was provided to the global polio eradication initiative for 2015-16. Another \$15 million has been committed to 2016-17. I am wanting to find out exactly what is going on in out years from now in this process, because that is where the question is.

Mr McDonald: There was a commitment around this over five years. I think it has two years to go. That commitment is split between the World Bank for vaccination and between GPEI for the other polio support. If Mr Exell is here, he will be able to give you the exact figures.

Senator MOORE: Was it clear from the start of the commitment that it was going to be split, Mr Exell or Mr McDonald?

Mr Exell: I do not have it with me. I will just double-check. The phrasing of the original announcement by the Prime Minister did refer to how the funding would go to support polio and broader immunisation systems. I do not think it specifically indicated GPEI or the World Bank.

Senator MOORE: There does seem to be some concern—I am sure this is the same question raised by Senator Rhiannon—in the polio eradication area about the efficacy of having this program split. There is some of that in terms of ownership, I would expect, but the outcome was clearly for the eradication of polio. But the way I read the ongoing discussion, it seems that that has been extended to vaccination beyond polio in terms of the split of the funding.

Mr Exell: That is correct in your understanding. So the funding goes both to GPEI, which is a direct contribution to the polio eradication.

Senator MOORE: That is where the funding went in years 1 and 2.

Mr Exell: And there are contributions in years 3 and 4.

Senator MOORE: A lower contribution.

[Skip to content](#)



\$100 Million for Polio eradication and routine immunisations

Media release

1 June 2014

The Australian Government will commit \$100 million over five years for polio eradication and provide routine immunisations.

\$20 million will be provided in 2014/15 to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative providing immunisations to fight the re-emergence of polio.

Polio continues to strike the world's most vulnerable, especially children.

This debilitating disease is on the verge of being eradicated. However progress is now at risk with outbreaks being reported in northern Africa and the Middle East.

It is endemic in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria.

Health systems have been weakened by factors such as conflict and are failing to deliver routine immunisation, exposing unimmunised children to the virus.

In response, on 5 May 2014, the World Health Organization declared polio a public health emergency of international concern.

Once eradicated, polio will be only the second major disease after small pox to be defeated. This will be a major global victory for public health.

Australia has a proud history of support for polio eradication and is committed to helping finish the job.

The last wild polio virus case in Australia was reported in 1972.

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