

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT)

Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)

23 October 2025

PDR Number: IQ25-000120

Corporate representation in WHO governing bodies

Spoken

Hansard page number: 5

Senator: Zoe McKenzie

Question:

Ms McKENZIE: So those corporate interests aren't represented anywhere in the governance model? I haven't looked at that myself, but I probably should have.

Mr Starmer: I'm not an expert on the WHO governance model, but there is an executive board made up of selected members states, of which Australia is currently one. We can take on notice for you the question about corporate representation in WHO governing bodies more broadly, but I'd refer to my earlier answer. Fundamentally, it is an organisation whose agenda and governance are set by its members states.

Answer:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is a Member State-led organisation.
- Member States, including Australia, are responsible for the governance and management of the WHO through the annual World Health Assembly (WHA), which is the decision-making body of the WHO.
- Member States help prepare for the WHA through the WHO Executive Board (EB) and the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee (PBAC). Member States also direct WHO's work at a regional level through Regional Committee Meetings. Australia is part of the Western Pacific Region.
- To provide transparency of the discussions between Member States and the WHO, all meeting papers from the WHA, EB, PBAC and Regional Committee meetings are publicly available through WHO's website (see www.who.int/gb/gov/).

- WHA, EB and Regional Committee meetings are also live streamed, and recordings of recent meetings are available online.
- All non-Member State engagement with the WHO, including at regional and country levels, is bound by the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA) (see www.who.int/about/collaboration/non-state-actors).
 - FENSA places Member State oversight and safeguards on non-Member State influence on the WHO. This is done through strict restrictions around which Non-State Actors can be accepted into official relations with the WHO and how they can engage with and fund the WHO.
- Non-State Actors in official relations can be invited to WHO governance meetings, but only Member States have decision-making authority.
- A register of Non-State Actors in official relations with the WHO is available at <http://www.who.int/about/collaboration/non-state-actors/who-register-of-non-state-actors>.