

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

PUBLIC HEARING 30 September 2021

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

**Social Services Portfolio
Services Australia**

Topic: Consultation with states for digital certificate requirements

Question reference number: IQ21-000128

Member: Rex Patrick

Type of question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 October 2021

Question:

Senator PATRICK: Thank you very much. I was not intimating that you'd gone over budget. I just wanted to understand where you were sitting within the budget. Who was involved in developing the requirements developed for the digital certificate and who controls the requirements?

Mr Howard: The requirements are set by my division, Health Programs within Services Australia, after consultation with the Department of Health. They set the broad policy parameters, and then we work with Health in relation to designing the requirements to then give to our tech teams to deliver on.

Senator PATRICK: Did you consult, in those circumstances, with the states? Obviously there's this ministerial meeting that occurs, but at your level was there consultation with the states?

Mr Howard: I'd have to take that on notice, just to double-check exactly who we did consult with at the time. On these sorts of matters, we generally consult widely, but I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

In November 2020, the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Australian Digital Health Agency, engaged Services Australia to make critical enhancements to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) to support the effective monitoring and management of the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

Information on the development and design of the COVID-19 digital certificate was shared with state and territory representatives via regular Jurisdictional Immunisation Coordinators (JIC) meetings.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Social Services Portfolio Services Australia

Topic: Expenditure of digital certificate budget

Question reference number: IQ21-000127

Member: Rex Patrick

Type of question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 October 2021

Question:

Senator PATRICK: Can I just check what the budget was? I think he said there was \$12 million for the seal.

I'm not sure—

Ms Skinner: That's just Services Australia's budget.

Mr Howard: That's right. DFAT was also given money for the international certificate. As I said, we'll take that on notice to provide that back. In relation to the package of measures for the digital certificate and our broader vaccination response, it was \$35.198 million in 2020-21 and \$4.202 million in 2021-22 that was allocated to

Services Australia. It's not just for the digital certificate. There were a raft of measures around the Immunisation Register and data to Health and maximising channels through which customers could access their proof of vaccination.

Senator PATRICK: How much of that budget has been spent to date?

Mr Howard: I'd have to take it on notice.

Senator PATRICK: Roughly?

Ms Skinner: I'm just reflecting on a conversation with my chief financial officer a few weeks ago. We are within budget. So we are not over budget. I think I could probably give you that assurance, but I'll need to take exactly what the expenditure is on notice.

Answer:

As part of the 2020-21 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, the Government has provided Services Australia funding relating to COVID-19 vaccination as outlined in the table below.

	2020-21 \$m	2021-22 \$m	2022-23 \$m	2023-24 \$m	Total \$m
2020-21 PAES					
COVID-19 Response Package - Vaccination and Treatment	35.2	4.2	0.0	0.0	39.4
COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation and Rollout	24.6	63.1	8.3	5.6	101.5
Total Funding	59.8	67.3	8.3	5.6	140.9

Services Australia will deliver the budget measures outlined above within the funding provided by Government.

Any further funding to be received by Services Australia in regards to COVID-19 vaccination activities would form part of the Social Services 2021-22 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements.

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PUBLIC HEARING 30 September 2021

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

**Social Services Portfolio
Services Australia**

Topic: Hard copy vaccination certificate for COVID-19

Question reference number: IQ21-000125

Member: Rex Patrick

Type of question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 October 2021

Question:

Senator PATRICK: Thank you. That's very clear. They basically set the rules and you implement them. There are two forms of vaccination certificate so far as I know. One of them is a hard copy and one is a digital copy. When was it decided to have a hard copy vaccination certificate for COVID?

Ms Skinner: There has always been a hard copy immunisation history statement. Of course, that lists every vaccination that you've had. As we moved further forward, it was viewed that it was appropriate, for privacy reasons, for people to have an option to just have a version of their record that just catered for the COVID vaccine. That decision was taken many months ago, and we implemented on 5 June the ability to have a record of the vaccination that just extracted a citizen's COVID-19 record. It also protects from having to expose, if somebody wanted your immunisation history, all of your other information.

Senator PATRICK: Maybe you could take on notice when the decision was made to go down that pathway. I understand 5 June was—

Ms Skinner: That's when we implemented it. It's well early in the year, but we'll find that.

Answer:

In November 2020, the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Australian Digital Health Agency, engaged Services Australia to make critical enhancements to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) to support the effective monitoring and management of the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

This included the implementation of a quick and easy method for consumers to access evidence of their COVID-19 vaccination status in the form of a specific COVID-19 vaccination 'certificate'. The COVID-19 Digital Immunisation Certificate was implemented on 5 June 2021.