

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

21 June 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000107

Expiry date AstraZeneca stock

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 22

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: I got some reports that, last week, some extra doses of AstraZeneca were shipped out to GPs with an expiry date of 30 June on them. Does that sound like anything that might have happened—that they've got, like, a week to use it before the expiry date runs out, based on getting extra doses?

Dr De Toca: It would be good to get those reports so that we can confirm that on notice.

Ms Edwards: We don't know anything about that, but, if you've got information like that, we really encourage you to provide it to us, so we can—

CHAIR: You don't know that there would be batches expiring in a week?

Ms Edwards: We certainly wouldn't expect that and we're certainly not aware of that circumstance. We are surprised by any such report, but we'd carefully investigate.

Dr De Toca: Just to be clear, the recent instances of additional doses sent out to GPs—including a doubling of doses in the Sunshine Coast, following a conversation with the Queensland government, in response to the case identified in that area, as well as the doubling of doses for Victorian GPs after the cluster—was done taking into consideration the epidemiological context, the requests from GPs and the requests from the states and territories, not because of an issue of management of expiring stock.

CHAIR: But if doses were going to expire on 30 June, the position at the moment is that they should not be used, based on your regulatory approvals—is that right?

Dr Skerritt: If a dose could be used today—

CHAIR: Yes, but once the expiry—

Dr Skerritt: After 30 June, they will have expired. But I also am unfamiliar with the situation you've quoted.

Ms Edwards: It's certainly a circumstance we'd be surprised by. We've been, in real-time, collecting the doses from the factory and delivering them. So it's a circumstance where we would be surprised if it happened, but please pass on the information.

Dr De Toca: That expiry date would have to be before domestic production.

Ms Edwards: I'm happy to investigate.

Answer:

The Commonwealth's contracted logistics providers have not supplied any stock reaching expiry on 30 June to general practices since May 2021. Any stock with this expiry date received by general practices since May 2021 would only be if the doses were reallocated to the general practice directly by another general practice or a state or territory government.