

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Written Question on Notice - 10 July 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000395

Mask wearing in public and supply:

Written

Senator: Jacqui Lambie

Question:

Has the Department looked at whether Australian supplies of surgical and P2 masks would become stretched if the public health advice changed to recommend mask-wearing in public?

- a. How many masks would this require each week?
- b. Would private and public supplies of surgical and P2 masks be sufficient over the next six months if the health advice changed to recommend mask wearing in public?
- c. Would private and public supply of surgical and P2 masks be sufficient over the next six months if the health advice changed for residents in hot-spot areas with high levels of community transmission, such as Melbourne?

Answer:

The National Medical Stockpile (NMS) is a strategic reserve of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medicines for use in the national response to a public health emergency. In line with this, the Department of Health's modelling is directed to requirements for frontline health care workers and the NMS rather than the broader public and Australian supplies. The assessment of availability of masks for purposes beyond frontline health workers is not a responsibility of the Department of Health.

A range of private providers are supporting significant national access to masks and other PPE as part of commercial arrangements.