

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

14 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000482

Commencement of community transmission in Victoria:

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 5

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: Professor Kelly, could you go back and check the date that you've given us on the point that you became concerned about community transmission? When I look back now, on 10 July, there were 1,154 active cases in Victoria. So I just find it staggering if that's the point that the Commonwealth got concerned about the level of community transmission.

Prof. Kelly: I'd like to take that on notice. It was earlier than that. I do remember in mid- to late June—actually, I was on leave at that point—there were discussions and concerns at that time. I don't know if you recall.

Prof. Murphy: Certainly, in late June, the Commonwealth was having daily meetings to discuss aged-care outbreaks. We were seriously concerned in late June about the aged-care outbreaks, and we were actively case managing them. One of the challenges—

CHAIR: I didn't think there were any outbreaks in late June.

Prof. Murphy: There were. There were small numbers of cases—

CHAIR: Coming through—

Prof. Murphy: In Victoria there've been small numbers of cases right throughout the whole pandemic. Most of those, in the early phases of community transmission in Victoria, as I said, were single cases that were managed really well. When the public health response was strong and there were small numbers of cases, it was much easier to control it.

Answer:

On 18 June 2020, the Victorian Chief Health Officer advised that clusters of cases of increasing size and geographic spread had been identified in Victoria.