

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Thursday 23 April 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000020

Question Subject: Healthcare access to PPE

Type of Question: Writing

Senator: Senator Gallagher

Question:

With reference to Professor Murphy's evidence on 23 April 2020 that "at no stage have we ever been in a position where I have felt that any safety has been compromised by a lack of PPE":

Have all providers of healthcare had access to necessary PPE since the emergence of COVID-19 in Australia.

Answer:

The Department is not aware of instances where safety has been compromised by a lack of the recommended PPE.

The Department believes that the initial concern related to the provision of masks has now been addressed with substantial purchases by the National Medical Stockpile (NMS), states and territories and the private market. The Department is managing national and international shortages of required PPE products and is providing supplies of available products, primarily PPE, to frontline healthcare workers. Remaining pressure on the supply of gloves and disposable gowns is being addressed with orders expected to arrive within coming weeks.

On 7 May 2020, the Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, announced an additional 40 million masks would be made available from the NMS to the states and territories, aged care, and Primary Health Networks for dispatch by the end of May, on top of the more than 33 million masks which have already been dispatched.

The NMS is a strategic reserve of drugs, vaccines, antidotes and PPE for use in the national response to a public health emergency and exists to supplement holdings of state and territory health authorities to support continuity of service provision.