

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 26 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000511

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Syphilis outbreak

Type of Question: Hansard Page 56, 26 May 2017

Senator: McCarthy, Malrmdirri

Question:

Senator McCARTHY: Just in terms of the question around the \$4.4 million, if you just go to page 25 of Budget Paper No. 3, Federal Financial Relations 2017-18 Part 2: Payments for specific purposes. That may help.

Dr Studdert: I think we will take that on notice and confirm that with you.

Senator McCARTHY: Okay, but you were just asking me where I got that figure.

Dr Studdert: Yes. Sorry; we do not have that budget paper.

Answer:

Budget Paper 3, 2017-18 refers to Schedule A of the *Project Agreement on Healthcare and Disease Prevention in the Torres Strait Islands*. The Project Agreement (PA) continues the longstanding bilateral funding arrangements established between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments under the *Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy Package of Measures* (which commenced in 2009-10). These arrangements aim to reduce the health burden and communicable disease risks associated with free cross-border movements in the Torres Strait Protected Zone between designated Treaty villages in the South Fly region of Papua New Guinea (PNG), and the Torres Strait.

Schedule A of the PA provides \$4.4 million over four years (\$1.1 million per year) to the Queensland Government to continue and expand activities carried out under the previous *National Partnership Agreement for Specified Projects, Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy – Saibai Island Clinic*, which ceased in June 2016.

Under Schedule A, the Queensland Government will be funded to expand the delivery of communicable and chronic disease prevention and education activities to the entire Torres Strait region, and to enhance the detection and reporting of communicable diseases to ensure that health activities are responsive to current and emerging risks. The activities are targeted to sexually transmissible infections and blood borne viruses including vaccine preventable hepatitis B and rotavirus infection.

The PA is currently being finalised and is anticipated to be in place by the end of June 2017. Although the Torres Strait Treaty does not specify access to health services in the Torres Strait as an entitlement, PNG nationals often travel to Australia to access health services in the Torres Strait that are in close proximity to the PNG South Fly coastal district. This presents a disproportionate burden on the limited health resources in the Torres Strait and poses an increased risk of communicable diseases for these vulnerable Australian communities.