

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 26 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000512

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Areas of Syphilis Outbreak

Type of Question: Hansard Page 57, 26 May 2017

Senator: McCarthy, Malrindirri

Question:

Senator McCARTHY: So you are going to provide a list of the areas where the outbreak is concentrated. Can you inform us as to whether or not the infectious syphilis outbreak is also prevalent among ATSI people in NT and WA? You touched on it.

Ms Appleyard: Yes, there are cases in the Northern Territory and WA.

Senator McCARTHY: How severe are the cases there?

CHAIR: I am sorry, Senator McCarthy; that is the five minutes. I apologise, but we will come back to you if we have time. I know Senator Smith had some follow-up questions.

Answer:

Areas currently affected by the infectious syphilis outbreak

Queensland

- North West Hospital and Health Service area;
- Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service area;
- Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service area;
- Townsville Hospital and Health Service area.

Northern Territory

- All regions in the Northern Territory have been declared outbreak regions.

Western Australia

- Kimberley region.

South Australia

- Far North, Western and Eyre regions.

Severity of cases

Severity in symptoms associated with syphilis will vary between cases and depends on the stage of the disease at the time of diagnosis. All cases of infectious syphilis are treated using standard treatment protocols depending on the stage of infection. Further information on case management is available in the *Communicable Disease Network Australia National Guidelines for Public Health*

Units: Syphilis (<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cdna-song-syphilis.htm>).

Severity of outcomes associated with infections in-utero (congenital syphilis) is dependent on the stage of pregnancy the mother acquired the infection and whether the mother received appropriate treatment for the infection. Miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death are the most severe outcomes associated with congenital syphilis. Since January 2011 (the commencement of the outbreak), 10 cases of congenital syphilis have been associated with the current outbreak, of which four were reported to have died from the condition.¹

Further information, including routine updates on the development of the outbreak, is available on the *Infectious Syphilis Outbreak* webpage on the Department of Health website (<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-infectious-syphilis-outbreak.htm>).

1. Please note that all data are provisional and subject to change due to ongoing case investigation.