

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-209

OUTCOME 14: Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: CLOSURE OF TORRES STRAIT TB CLINICS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

- a) As you are aware the TB clinics in the Torres Strait have now been closed and 40 patients are being transported back to PNG. In the absence of these clinics what arrangements are in place to deal with people crossing this utterly porous border who are infected with TB or other serious infectious diseases?
- b) What will now happen to people from PNG who present in the Torres Strait with TB?
- c) Under existing arrangements are all people entering Australian territory with infectious diseases reported?

Answers:

a) and b)

Two further handover clinics are scheduled to be held in April and June 2012. The Department of Health and Ageing is advised that 68 TB patients have been transferred to Daru General Hospital for continued treatment and follow up. This number included 6 newly identified TB patients who were transferred during handover clinics in line with the handover process agreed at the September 2011 handover planning meeting in Cairns.

For other serious infectious diseases, Queensland Health will continue to direct management and treatment arrangements for Papua New Guinea nationals who present at Queensland Health clinics in the Torres Strait based on their own treatment protocols.

- c) Not all people entering Australian territory with infectious diseases are reported. The National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System coordinates the national surveillance of diseases on the National Notifiable Disease List only. A case qualifies for national notification if it is diagnosed within Australia. Those people entering Australia who are diagnosed prior to arrival with a communicable disease and who seek health care within Australia will not be notified nationally. This avoids duplication of international notifications. States and territories continue to manage these cases that are diagnosed overseas.