

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-210

OUTCOME 14: Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: NATIONAL NOTIFIABLE DISEASES SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

- a) Does the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) have surveillance and detection systems in place so we know these how many foreign nationals are entering our borders that have a serious and infectious disease?
- b) Do they capture any information from an epidemiological perspective?
- c) Do the figures contained in the NNDSS recordings show the complete picture of the incidence of infectious disease among foreign nationals crossing our borders?
- d) If the honest answers to the previous three questions is no shouldn't the focus of an infectious disease surveillance system be all infectious people crossing our borders regardless of where they are diagnosed or where they are receiving treatment?

Answer:

- a) The National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) coordinates the national surveillance of 65 communicable diseases specified under the National Notifiable Diseases List (NNDL). The NNDSS captures incident (new) cases that are diagnosed within Australia. The permanent resident location is reported, but is not always known.
- b) Yes.
- c) Cases of infectious diseases notified to the NNDSS represent a proportion of the total actual incidence of a disease. This proportion is known as the 'notified fraction'. A notification relies on a person being ill, seeking medical care, being diagnosed and the laboratory or clinician notifying the health authority. The notified fraction may vary by disease, by jurisdiction and by time.
- d) The NNDSS coordinates the national surveillance of diseases on the NNDL 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.