

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-331

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: UNIVERSAL NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

In an answer to a question to this committee in March 2010, you stated that the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) had asked its neonatal hearing screening working group to develop a screening pathway to support improved proportional coverage for neonatal hearing screening, minimum framework for a national approach to data collection and management. This work was to be considered by AHMAC late in 2010. In relation to this, please advise:

- a) Have these pathways and standards been finalised?
- b) Were they actually considered by AHMAC later in 2010, as you stated to the Committee that they would be? If not, why not?
- c) Given this working group was established in 2009, please outline what concrete results have been achieved.
- d) Did the Department advise the Prime Minister, the Health Minister or the Minister for Disabilities whether any and if so, which of these standards or frameworks were in place prior to their press release of 29 June 2009?

Answer:

- a) On 9 March 2011, the Australian Population Health Development Principal Committee (APHDPC) endorsed the draft National Guidelines for Neonatal Hearing Screening, subject to further discussions with jurisdictions regarding the Guidelines' proposed indicators.
- b) As per a).
- c) At the Council of Australian Governments' meeting on 2 July 2009, all Australian Governments agreed to ensure that by the end of 2010 every child born in Australia has access to screening for congenital hearing impairments.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) was commissioned to produce a discussion paper titled Data requirements to support a national approach to neonatal hearing screening, which was produced in April 2010.

In November 2010, the Neonatal Hearing Screening Working Group (a working group established under the Screening Sub-Committee of the Australian Population Health Development Principal Committee) provided draft National Guidelines for Neonatal hearing screening to the Screening Sub-Committee for consideration. This committee endorsed them in December 2010, noting that some further work was needed.

As answered in a), on 9 March 2011, the APHDPC endorsed the draft National Guidelines for Neonatal Hearing Screening, subject to further discussions with jurisdictions regarding the Guidelines' proposed indicators.

The AIHW was commissioned to produce a discussion paper titled Proposed national performance indicators for neonatal hearing screening in Australia, which was produced in September 2011.

In April 2012, the Child Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee of the Australian Population Health Development Principal Committee considered the proposed performance indicators and agreed that they be forwarded with the draft Guidelines, to the Community Care and Population Health Principal Committee for their consideration.

- d) The Department of Health and Ageing is not aware of any advice provided.