

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 13 & 15 February 2013

Question: E13-242

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: Spelling of fetus – Why?

Type of Question: Hansard Page 33, 13 February 2013

Senator: Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

Okay. So what prompted this change?

Answer:

The issue of the spelling of the word fetus in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (the National Statement), was raised during a stakeholder consultation process on proposed changes to the National Statement in March 2011.

The 2009-12 triennium Australian Health Ethics Committee agreed that ‘foetus’ should be spelt as fetus throughout the National Statement. Action was not taken until 2013 as changes to parts of the National Statement that refer to the word fetus (and that were the subject of the consultation) were not ready to be made until 2013 and it was considered prudent to make the spelling changes at the same time as other more substantive changes.

The spelling change is a minor amendment to the National Statement. For minor amendments, the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* (NHMRC Act) and regulations require that a notice be published in a daily newspaper that circulates throughout Australia and on an NHMRC website within 30 days after the day of the decision to propose to dispense with the requirement for public consultation. The notice in The Australian fulfilled this requirement.

For more substantive changes to human research guidelines, the NHMRC Act requires public consultation and tabling in Parliament. These requirements are being followed for the more substantive change to the National Statement.