

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016, 10 February 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000023

OUTCOME: 2 - Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: Accessing Closing The Gap Medicines

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

- a) What actions are the Department or Minister taking to monitor the effect of decisions like this, especially with regard to the unintended consequences, which may adversely affect the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- b) Is the Department or Minister working with manufacturers to resume supply of these affected medications, or do they plan to?
- c) What other actions is the Department planning or could the Department take to determine the need for, supply of, and access to essential medicines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- d) What are the arrangements for informing the computerised medical record software companies of changes, so that software is up to date with the availability of particular brands of medications for the right patients on the PBS?

Answer:

- a) The Government undertakes broad monitoring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, including health risks, through the biennial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework and the six monthly reporting on national key performance indicators for Indigenous primary health care organisations.

It is expected that any unintended consequences of this decision will be identified through these monitoring processes.

- b) In cases where a medicine sponsor has taken a commercial decision to withdraw a product from the Pharmaceutical benefits Scheme (PBS), the Government cannot compel them to seek relisting.
- c) The Government invests in specific programmes to support and improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, beyond general subsidies provided through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and PBS. This includes the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme.

- d) The Department of Health provides advance notice of all changes to PBS listings and prices under embargo to software companies and other affected stakeholders, usually four weeks before the effective date of the Schedule.