

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016, 10 February 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000220

OUTCOME: 9 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: Lyme Disease

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

In October [Ref No: SQ15-000761] I asked about the different strains of *Borrelia* being tested in Australia. You stated “Australian pathologists will routinely communicate with overseas experts in reference centres, e.g., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States and arrange for testing if deemed necessary.”

- a) To date what, if any, other *Borrelia* strains have made it into the Australian testing regimen?
- b) If there are none, when will emerging strains be added to the Australian testing regimen?

Answer:

- a) Pathologists who offer Lyme disease serology commonly screen specimens with an enzyme immunoassay, and reactive sera undergo immunoblot testing. The enzyme immunoassays and immunoblots used cover the genospecies in *Borrelia burgdorferi* which are those found in north America and Europe.
- b) If emerging strains do not already react in currently used in vitro diagnostic devices, pathologists and medical laboratory scientists usually act to modify assays (if possible), or acquire assays that do include novel targets or ensure reports clarify that novel targets may not be covered.