

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016, 10 February 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000224

OUTCOME: 9 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: Lyme Disease

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

The response to a similar QoN Ref No: SQ15-000762 from the previous Supplementary Estimate hearing is grossly inadequate in addressing this important issue. If the department welcomes new research surely it would be better to say the department is seeking evidence, rather than there is no evidence.

- a) Would the department consider its responsibility to present information clearly and unambiguously and refrain from creating the impression that it is acceptable to deny the disease exists in Australia?
- b) Do you think such a change in language could help clarify some of the issues in this controversy?

Answer:

- a) The Department of Health has presented the outcomes of the “Scoping Study to Develop a Research Project(s) to Investigate the Presence or Absence of Lyme Disease in Australia” as well as the outcomes of the Chief Medical Officer’s Clinical Advisory Committee on Lyme Disease (CACLD) meetings clearly. The Department does not deny there are many Australians presenting with a chronic tick borne illness consisting of a constellation of debilitating symptoms.
- b) It is important that language is used carefully when describing illness to ensure a common understanding amongst all involved.