

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000136

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Primary Health Commissioning in Tasmania

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Duniam, Jonathon

Question:

Given the nature of Tasmania's small population, do any conflicts of interest exist for Primary Health Tasmania board directors and/or staff with service providers that were successful through the commissioning process?

a) If so, what measures are put in place to address such conflicts of interest?

Answer:

As at 16 March 2017, no notifications of a conflict of interest had been received by the Department of Health in respect of any commissioning activity undertaken by Primary Health Tasmania Limited (PHT), which operates the Tasmania Primary Health Network (PHN).

PHT has advised it is fully aware of its duties and obligations under contract to the Australian Government and has robust systems and processes in place to ensure potential conflicts of interest are managed appropriately.

In addition to policies and operational practice, PHT has advised it uses professional external and independent probity oversight and advice for all of its commissioning process. Probity signoff and reporting is mandatory for all its commissioning processes.

A declared interest does not necessarily represent a conflicted position and the usual processes of ensuring documented withdrawal and non-participation in key decision making activity at governance level apply.

Under clause 9.4 of the Standard Funding Agreement between the Department of Health and PHT, the organisation warranted that no real or perceived conflicts of interest, involving or affecting the organisation or its personnel existed or were likely to arise at the commencement of the Agreement, and agreed to immediately notify the Department if a conflict arises or appears likely to arise.

In addition, the Department requires PHNs to identify, document and manage real and perceived conflicts of interest, put in place appropriate mitigation strategies and structure their arrangements to avoid or appropriately manage conflicts of interest.