

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2013-14, 5/6 & 7 June 2013

Question: E13-039

OUTCOME: 14 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: The Hon Warren Entsch's Private Members Bill

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Boyce

Question:

Is not the passage of Warren Entsch's private members Bill on this issue through the HR unopposed - a clear sign that all sides of politics recognise that there is indeed a crisis and that the current policy is not working?

Answer:

An independent study undertaken by the Head of Epidemiology at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Services and commissioned by the Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG), *Evaluation of Risks of Tuberculosis in Western Province PNG*, has concluded that closing the Queensland Health tuberculosis (TB) services for PNG nationals on Saibai and Boigu Islands was likely to reduce the risk of the endemic spread of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) to Australian residents. The study concludes that managing TB services within a PNG national program is likely to:

- reduce the risk of MDR TB transmission to Australian residents in the short term by reducing the number of PNG nationals seeking healthcare in Australia; and
- reduce the risk of increased drug resistance, by reducing access to second line agency and loose drugs available outside a control program.

The study also found that risk of transmission is low if contact is confined to trading, fishing and other outdoor activity.