

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

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

Question: E13-257

OUTCOME: 14 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: Closure of the Tuberculosis Services for Papua New Guinea Nationals in the Torres Strait

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Boyce

Question:

Would any of the events and factors listed above (QoNs E13-253 - 256) encourage the Department to recommend a change of policy and support the re-opening of the TB Clinics on Boigu and Saibai?

Answer:

No.

Provision of primary health care, including tuberculosis (TB) treatment in the Torres Strait, is the responsibility of the Queensland government. Cessation of the TB services for Papua New Guinea (PNG) nationals provided in the primary care clinics in the Torres Strait Islands was a decision of the Queensland government.

The primary health care clinics in the Torres Strait, including those on Saibai and Boigu Islands, are Queensland Health facilities and continue to operate. Queensland Health continues to provide TB health care for Torres Strait communities through these clinics and other Queensland Health facilities and services.

Better community-based health services in PNG's Western Province, provided with Australian Government support through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australian Aid, is improving outcomes for the Western Province community by enabling them to access the health care they need at home.

This approach also better manages the risk of TB transmission to Torres Strait communities, and is supported by an independent evaluation of risks of TB in PNG's Western Province, commissioned by the Government of PNG and undertaken by the head of the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service, Associate Professor Emma McBryde.