

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-435

OUTCOME 14: Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: MERCURY IN VACCINES

Hansard Page: CA 101

Senator Siewert asked:

Do we have any vaccines in Australia with Thiomersal?

Answer:

Since 2000 all vaccines on the current National Immunisation Program schedule for infants and children under eight years of age have been free of thiomersal. This was a precautionary measure to reduce the exposure of infants and children to mercury where possible, as other environmental sources of mercury, particularly from food, are difficult to eliminate. However, there is no evidence that thiomersal in vaccines has caused any adverse effects, developmental or neurological abnormalities, such as autism or any other health problem.

One vaccine used in Australia that contains small amounts of thiomersal is the Pandemic H1N1 vaccine when administered in multi dose vials (MDV). Thiomersal is present in MDVs as a preservative to prevent microbial contamination. There are no other vaccines in use in Australia which contain Thiomersal.