

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-021

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: DENTAL AMALGAM

Written Question on Notice

Senator Di Natale asked:

Is the Department aware that Australia has requested that dental amalgam be exempted from a global ban on mercury?

Answer:

The Government supports the progression and negotiation of an agreement designed to provide a suitable approach to govern the use of mercury and its eventual removal.

A medium to long-term phase-out (of dental amalgam) is more appropriate as similarly cost-effective alternatives are developed and become readily available in Australia, and in developing countries. This position is consistent with the World Health Organization's guidance on the use of mercury in health and dental health applications.