

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-022

OUTCOME 2: Access to Pharmaceutical Services

Topic: MERCURY TREATY

Written Question on Notice

Senator Di Natale asked:

It has been reported that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has reported receiving advice from DoHA about the toxicity of mercury and its environmental hazards.

- a) Has the Department provided such advice to other Departments?
- b) If so, what was that advice, and who was consulted in the formulation of that advice?

Answer:

- a) The Department of Health and Ageing (the Department) has provided advice to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities only in relation to the toxicity of mercury in the context of health related applications. It has not provided advice on the toxicity of mercury more broadly or its environmental hazards.
- b) The view of the Department is that a medium to long-term phase-out is more appropriate as similarly cost-effective alternatives are developed and become readily available in Australia, and in developing countries. The Department's advice is consistent with the World Health Organisation's guidance on the use of mercury in health and dental health applications.

Further questions should be directed to Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.