

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-181

OUTCOME 14: Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: TB IN THE TORRES STRAIT

Written Question on Notice

Senator Adams asked:

The 2010-11 Annual Report notes that DoHA has 'facilitated improved communication and surveillance systems' (page 341). Please outline to the Committee the main activities DoHA has undertaken to achieve this.

Answer:

The Department has facilitated improved communication and coordination between Queensland Health and the Papua New Guinea (PNG) health providers on cross border health issues through the Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee. The Department coordinated the establishment of a high frequency radio to telephone interconnect system to enable real-time cross border telecommunications and enhance surveillance capacity in the Torres Strait. The system facilitates timely links between clinicians on both sides of the border, allowing clinicians to monitor treatment and minimise the risk of communicable disease spread in the Torres Strait. The system enabled real-time communication during the recent cholera outbreak in the Western Province of PNG.