

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-284

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: CSL

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) Can TGA explain the situation behind the recent potential shortage of Penicillin in Australia due to a shortage from CSL?
- b) Was the TGA aware of the impending shortage?
- c) What did the TGA do to avert this shortage?
- d) How did the TGA let it get to such a critical point where a basic medicine like Penicillin may need to be rationed?

Answer:

- a) CSL is the sole supplier of benzylpenicillin in Australia. The situation arose due to a delay in manufacture overseas.
- b) Yes. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) was informed of this on 19 September 2011.
- c) The TGA worked with CSL and other potential Australian sponsors to identify alternative sources of benzylpenicillin and arranged supply under various exemptions for unregistered therapeutic goods to cover the period of shortage.
- d) Suppliers of medicines make commercial decisions about stock volumes manufactured or stockpiled in Australia and supply chain arrangements. The TGA does not have regulatory powers in relation to the distribution of medicines.

In the event of a sponsor indicating that a product will be out of stock, the TGA endeavours to work cooperatively with the Australian sponsors to ensure there is minimal impact on the Australian public.