

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-424

OUTCOME 14 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: NATIONAL MEDICAL STOCKPILE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What is the current status of the National Medical Stockpile in terms of type of product, unit of product, value of product and expiry time?

Answer:

The National Medical Stockpile (NMS) includes a range of vaccines, antidotes, antimicrobials and antiviral drugs intended for use in response to potential bioterrorism threats and pandemic influenza. The counter terrorism agents held in the NMS are not placed on the public record for national security reasons. The influenza antiviral drugs are Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and Zanamivir (Relenza).

The NMS currently holds sufficient stock of these two drugs to provide around 9.5 million treatment courses. The NMS also includes a range of non-drug items in the form of personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, gowns, antiseptics) and items used to administer influenza vaccine in a pandemic (needles, syringes, alcohol swabs, sharps containers, etc).

As stocks have been purchased at different times, and as each drug has a different shelf life, the expiry dates of the products held in the NMS vary across products and across batches of the same product. They can also change over time where the shelf life approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration is extended in the light of new stability data. The majority of stock in the NMS at present has a remaining shelf life of at least two years and some items have a remaining shelf life of six years.

The total value of the NMS is currently \$223.6 million.