

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 21 October 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000767

OUTCOME: 9 - Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Topic: Lyme Disease - Transmission

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that tick borne pathogens can be spread through blood transfusion. Is the Government going to recommend that Australian blood banks test for tick borne pathogens considering the devastating outcome that could eventuate if an Australian patient acquires a tick borne pathogen via blood transfusion? If not, why?

Answer:

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service asks donors about their current health status and any disease or condition that may create a problem for donation. If a donor mentions Lyme disease or other similar illness the donor is deferred from donation.

Screening of blood for donation requires laboratory tests that are targeted at specific agents of illness. In the absence of a known agent for these chronic debilitating symptoms, screening is not possible. However, as noted above, anyone who is unwell would be deferred from donating blood.