

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2013 - 2014, 28 February 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000092

OUTCOME: 8 - Indigenous Health

Topic: Ear Health in Aboriginal Children

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert Rachel

Question:

Is there an agreed national strategic approach to tackling ear health in Aboriginal children?

Answer:

Effort has been focused on developing and supporting a number of key platforms to improve ear health, including:

- training of GP's, practice staff and Aboriginal Health Workers to perform ear and hearing screening;
- provision and maintenance of ear and hearing equipment;
- additional services and better coordination of services to ensure that Indigenous people have access to health professionals, including in rural and remote locations;
- development of standardised treatment protocols such as 'Recommendations for Clinical Care Guidelines on the Management of Otitis Media in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations (2010)'; and
- promotion and information sharing targeted to carers and parents to improve understanding of ear disease and its prevention through primary management and behavioural change.

In addition to GP general attendance consultation items there are a number of dedicated Medicare Benefits Schedule rebateable items which, although not specific to the management of ear health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, includes an optional ear health assessment at the discretion of the clinician (for example, the Healthy Kids Check and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Assessment and associated follow up services).