

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 2013 - 2014, 28 February 2014**

**Ref No:** SQ14-000095

**OUTCOME:** 8 - Indigenous Health

**Topic:** Delivery of Ear Health Services to Aboriginal Children

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Siewert Rachel

**Question:**

What workforce capacity issues are there that impact upon the delivery of ear health services to Aboriginal children and how are they being addressed? What evidence base informs DOH's approach to this issue?

**Answer:**

Health workforce capacity issues identified in the delivery of hearing health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the:

- high turnover of skilled staff, particularly in remote areas, affecting the continuity of ear health services;
- long recruitment processes, and access for new staff to training in the use of the equipment;
- poor access to structured training courses in the use of audiometry equipment;
- lack of consistently available training in the use of audiometry equipment; and
- poor access to mentoring programs to support and complement training courses.

These issues are being addressed by:

- broadening the base of health workers qualified to use ear and hearing equipment
- funding the delivery of structured ear health equipment training
- offering regular and responsive training
- increasing the number of trainers in the use of audiometry equipment; and
- developing mentoring programmes to support health workers in the use of ear health equipment.

Two types of training are provided:

- a one day professional development workshop to familiarise health workers in the use of equipment used in ear health screenings; and
- accredited training in ear health screening procedures over a two week duration delivered through one module of either a Certificate IV or diploma-level course for health workers.

Kristine Battye Consulting undertook a study in 2010 to determine activity in each state and territory in relation to the management of otitis media and related hearing issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Also in 2010, Access Economics completed a planning and needs analysis to inform investments in and distribution of equipment in Aboriginal Medical Services and other primary health care services.