

SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO HEPATITIS C AND BLOOD SUPPLY IN AUSTRALIA

TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 19 August 2003 the Senate referred the following matters to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day of the 2004 winter session:

- (a) the history of post-transfusion Hepatitis in Australia, including when Non-A, Non-B Hepatitis (Hepatitis C) was first identified as a risk to the safety of blood supplies in Australia and internationally;
- (b) the understanding of Hepatitis C by blood bankers, virologists, and liver specialists during the past 3 decades, including when Hepatitis C was first identified as a virus transmissible through blood;
- (c) when the first cases of post-transfusion Hepatitis C were recorded in Australia;
- (d) when the Australian Red Cross and the plasma fractionator Commonwealth Serum Laboratories first become aware of infections from blood contaminated by Hepatitis C, and the actions taken by those organisations in response to those infections;
- (e) the process leading to the decision by the Australian Red Cross not to implement testing (such as surrogate testing) for Hepatitis C once it became available;
- (f) the likelihood that Hepatitis C infections could have been prevented by the earlier implementation of surrogate testing and donor deferral;
- (g) the implications for Australia of the world's most extensive blood inquiry, Canada's Royal Commission (the Krever Report);
- (h) the implications for Australia of the recent criminal charges against the Canadian Red Cross for not implementing surrogate testing for Hepatitis C in the 1980s;
- (i) the Commonwealth's involvement in the provision of compensation to victims of transfused Hepatitis C, including the use of confidentiality clauses in those compensation payments;
- (j) the high infection rate of Hepatitis C for people suffering from haemophilia;
- (k) the extent to which Australia has been self-sufficient in blood stocks in the past 3 decades;
- (l) the importation of foreign-sourced blood plasma for use in the manufacture of blood products, and its potential role in the proliferation of Hepatitis C infected blood;
- (m) the number of Australians who have been infected with Hepatitis C through blood transfusion;
- (n) the impact that blood-transfused Hepatitis C has had on its victims and their families; and
- (o) what services can be provided or remedies made available to improve outcomes for people adversely affected by transfused Hepatitis C.

Written submissions are invited and should be addressed to:

**The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Suite S1 59
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Closing date for the receipt of submissions is 12 December 2003.

The Committee prefers to receive submissions electronically as an attached document - email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Submissions become Committee documents and are made public only after a decision by the Committee. Persons making submissions must not release them without the approval of the Committee. Submissions are covered by parliamentary privilege but the unauthorised release of them is not.

Following consideration of submissions, the Committee will hold public hearings. The Committee will consider all submissions and may invite individuals and organisations to give evidence at the public hearings.

Information relating to Senate Committee inquiries, including notes to assist in the preparation of submissions for a Committee, can be located on the internet at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm

For further details contact the Committee Secretary, Phone: (02) 6277 3515,
Fax: (02) 6277 5829.
E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au