

**Question on notice no. 745**

**Portfolio question number: DoHAC SQ24-004666**

**2024-25 Supplementary budget estimates**

**Community Affairs Committee, Health and Aged Care Portfolio**

**Senator Malcolm Roberts:** asked the Department of Health and Aged Care on 7 November 2024—

Senator ROBERTS: What actions are being taken to identify those Australians now at risk of having received tainted blood when the blood should have been safe? Other countries had it safe. We didn't.

Mr Cahill: I don't accept that premise.

Senator Gallagher: I'm not accepting that proposition. I think we have very safe systems here.

Senator ROBERTS: We might have now, but we didn't then. It was neglected and people are crippled as a result of that. That's what I'm after. Some of my constituents are seriously in trouble through neglect. It's time for those involved in this horrendous scandal to come clean. Why are we burying this? Why aren't we looking?

Senator Gallagher: Again, I don't agree. The evidence that you've just been given would indicate an alternative view on that. Perhaps there's a way that we can send you all the links, for all the reviews and things that have been done, and inquiries into it and the responses to those, and you can have a see.

Senator ROBERTS: That would be fine, thank you.

**Answer —**

Please see attached answer.

## Senate Committee: Community Affairs Committee

### QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024-2025  
Outcome: 1 - Health Policy, Access and Support

PDR Number: SQ24-004666

**Question Subject:** Australians at risk of receiving tainted blood

**Type of Question:** Spoken, Hansard page 117, 07 November 2024

**Senator:** Malcolm Roberts

#### Question:

Senator ROBERTS: What actions are being taken to identify those Australians now at risk of having received tainted blood when the blood should have been safe? Other countries had it safe. We didn't.

Mr Cahill: I don't accept that premise.

Senator Gallagher: I'm not accepting that proposition. I think we have very safe systems here.

Senator ROBERTS: We might have now, but we didn't then. It was neglected and people are crippled as a result of that. That's what I'm after. Some of my constituents are seriously in trouble through neglect. It's time for those involved in this horrendous scandal to come clean. Why are we burying this? Why aren't we looking?

Senator Gallagher: Again, I don't agree. The evidence that you've just been given would indicate an alternative view on that. Perhaps there's a way that we can send you all the links, for all the reviews and things that have been done, and inquiries into it and the responses to those, and you can have a see.

Senator ROBERTS: That would be fine, thank you.

#### Answer:

The safety of Australia's blood supply during the 1980s was examined through the 2004 Senate Inquiry into Hepatitis C and the Blood Supply in Australia. The full report, *'Hepatitis C and the Blood Supply in Australia'*, is available at [www.apb.gov.au](http://www.apb.gov.au).

The Australian Government has implemented a range of initiatives consistent with the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's recommendations including ongoing funding for the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood's (Lifeblood) Lookback program, which investigates infections possibly transmitted through blood transfusion. More information on Lifeblood's Lookback program is available at [www.lifeblood.com.au/blood/blood-testing-and-safety](http://www.lifeblood.com.au/blood/blood-testing-and-safety).

Further Government initiatives include implementing national strategies and programs to address blood borne viruses, including hepatitis C, and subsidising medicines to treat hepatitis C and other blood borne viruses through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Since 2016, the Government has invested over \$7 billion to provide access to curative direct acting antiviral medicines through the PBS, to all eligible Australians regardless of how they acquired hepatitis C or their current circumstances.