

Outcome 14

Biosecurity and Emergency Response

Australia's health system has coordinated arrangements to respond effectively to national health emergencies, including infectious disease outbreaks, terrorism and natural disaster

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Outcome 14 is focused on protecting the health and well-being of all Australians through coordinated arrangements that are capable of responding effectively to national emergencies. The Australian Government aims to achieve this outcome by strengthening the nation's capacity to identify, monitor and implement effective and sustained responses to national health threats or emergencies including communicable disease outbreaks, terrorism, natural disasters or environmental hazards. The Australian Government will work with the states and territories to achieve this outcome.

Outcome 14 is the responsibility of the Office of Health Protection, within the Department.

The Year Ahead

In 2007-08, the Australian Government will continue to build Australia's capability to monitor, assess and respond to health threats of national significance. The Government will also build on lessons learned from Exercise Cumpston '06, to enhance Australia's preparedness for pandemic influenza and strengthen Australia's expertise, and international networks and partnerships, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Key Strategic Directions for 2007-08

During 2007-08, the Australian Government will:

- build on the capabilities for national health emergency response, tested through Exercise Cumpston '06, and enhance existing capacity to ensure Australia's health system can respond to mass casualty events;
- ensure pandemic influenza preparedness plans, policy, communications and reporting are based on the latest evidence and the lessons of Exercise Cumpston '06;
- refine communicable disease surveillance systems to detect, assess and respond to communicable disease threats in Australia and overseas;
- support effective communicable disease control and national biosecurity initiatives through policy, legislative and regulatory measures; and
- facilitate strategic approaches to environmental threats to human health.

Major Activities

National Health Emergency Planning and Response

In 2007-08, the Australian Government will address gaps in Australia's emergency response plans and maintain a state of readiness to respond to national and other health emergencies. Implementing lessons from Exercise Cumpston '06 will increase the Government's capability to respond to national health emergencies. Activities will strengthen and support the coordination of national health emergency decision making through the Australian Health Protection Committee, as well as operational protocols between the National Health Incident Room and other operations centres, and deployable health response capability.

Focus will be on strengthening biosecurity controls, by establishing a regulatory regime for laboratories handling biological hazards. The Government will also continue to fund the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre at the Royal Darwin Hospital, to build capacity to respond to an emergency involving a large number of casualties. The centre will also maintain a state of readiness to treat the injured in the event of a national health emergency such as an act of bioterrorism or large scale natural disaster in Australia or the region. Additionally, the Government will work to improve the ability to collect information on a nation mass casualty response capacity. This will include working with the states and territories to exercise mass casualty response capability.

Furthermore, the Government will provide, for the second and final year, a general purpose payment to the Australian Red Cross Society as a general contribution towards its health-related work in humanitarian relief and community support to Australia and the region.

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness

In 2007-08, the Government will continue to ensure arrangements are in place to deal with the event of pandemic influenza. A priority will be to refine and revise the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza, in consultation with the states and territories, through the Australian Health Protection Committee. The plan will be updated to reflect clinical and scientific evidence emerging since its last issue in May 2006, and to build on the lessons from Exercise Cumpston '06.

As part of the Government's commitment to purchasing the H5N1 vaccine as soon as it proves safe and effective, the Department will continue in 2007-08 to monitor the global market for pandemic and pre-pandemic vaccine. The Department will particularly monitor the status and outcomes of vaccine trials globally, and the consideration by regulators of pre-pandemic vaccines and core pandemic dossiers, with a view to advising the Government on options for supply of these vaccines. It will also monitor its stockpile of antiviral medicines and other pandemic related supplies in the National Medical Stockpile.

In 2007-08, the Government will provide funding to the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza to move to state of the art new facilities at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory. The Australian hosted centre is the only World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza in the southern hemisphere. The centre is a hub for influenza expertise in Australia and contributes significantly to pandemic influenza policy and preparedness.

Communicable Disease Surveillance

In 2007-08, the Australian Government will continue to maintain programs that provide effective surveillance and warning of international communicable disease threats that could impact on the health of Australians. For example, the Government, through the Department, will further develop the national Biosecurity Surveillance System to help respond to a communicable disease outbreak within Australia. The Department will also implement a new version of the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System Data Warehouse to provide improved data storage and enable improved national reporting of diseases. In addition, work will be carried out by the Department to strengthen the links between animal and human surveillance, and the potential impact of zoonotic diseases. Improvements in surveillance in 2007-08 will also provide the Government with data to measure the effectiveness of national immunisation programs.

In 2007-08, the Government, through OzFoodNet, Australia's national foodborne illness surveillance system, will take the lead in developing guidelines for investigating outbreaks of gastroenteritis. OzFoodNet, in conjunction with the NSW Food Authority, will also conduct a comprehensive national survey of the incidence of gastroenteritis and foodborne illness, including determining the prevalence of gastroenteritis in aged care settings. These activities will seek to reduce the social and economic impact of foodborne illness and will gauge the effectiveness of regulatory interventions.

The Australian Government will continue to work in 2007-08 with partners in the Asia-Pacific region, and international organisations such as the World Health Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Health Secretariat and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Health Task Force, to ensure effective surveillance of communicable disease outbreaks in regional countries. The Government will also continue to support the development of international capacity building initiatives in the areas of communicable disease surveillance and response.

In 2007-08, the Australian Government will support mosquito control operations in the Torres Strait and on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory, to ensure mosquitos are eliminated before they become established in mainland Australia and spread diseases such as dengue fever.

The Government will also maintain the national capacity for production of anti-venom to treat venomous bites and stings peculiar to Australia, many of which are life threatening.

Biosecurity

The Australian Government will work to strengthen its national biosecurity initiatives in 2007-08. Through the Department, the Government will further develop human health border screening protocols and provide advice for managing the human health risk of biological imports. The Department will also provide policy guidance to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service for human quarantine operations and administer the human quarantine aspects of the Australian quarantine legislation.

In 2007-08, the Government will establish a national regulatory regime to help limit opportunities for the illegal/unauthorised use of biological agents for terrorist purposes. This will be taken forward through the proposed National Health Security legislation, which will also bolster Australia's surveillance capacity for communicable disease outbreaks and other health emergencies.

Environmental Health

In 2007-08, the Australian Government, through the Department will provide strategic support for evidence-based, nationally consistent, approaches to managing environmental threats to human health. This will include providing health advice to government stakeholders on environmental risks to human health, including those associated with contaminated land, air, water and food, and those arising from climate change.

Outcome 14 Resourcing

Table 3.1.14 shows how the 2007-08 Budget appropriations translate to total resourcing for Outcome 14, including administered expenses, revenue from government (appropriation), revenue from other sources, and the total price of outputs.

Table 3.1.14: Total Resources for Outcome 14

	Estimated actual 2006-07 \$'000	Budget estimate 2007-08 \$'000
Administered appropriations		
Program 14.1: Health Emergency Planning and Response		
Appropriation Bill 1	28,846	31,041
Appropriation Bill 2	14,143	14,477
	42,989	45,518
Program 14.2: Surveillance		
Appropriation Bill 1	5,131	5,605
Appropriation Bill 2	818	818
	5,949	6,423
Total Administered Appropriations	48,938	51,941
Departmental appropriations		
Health and Ageing		
Output Group 1 - Policy Advice	11,066	10,856
Output Group 2 - Program Management	12,742	12,501
Total price of departmental outputs		
<i>(Total revenue from government and from other sources)</i>	23,808	23,357
Total revenue from government (appropriations) contributing to price of departmental outputs	23,114	22,690
Total revenue from other sources	694	667
Total price of departmental outputs		
<i>(Total revenue from government and from other sources)</i>	23,808	23,357
Total Price of Outputs for Outcome 14		
<i>(Total Revenue from Government and from other sources)</i>	23,808	23,357
Total estimated resourcing for Outcome 14		
<i>(Total price of outputs and administered appropriations)</i>	72,746	75,298
	2006-07	2007-08
Average Staffing Level (number)		
Department	176	175

Measures Affecting Outcome 14

A summary of measures affecting this outcome is provided at Table 2.2, Section 2. Measure descriptions are published in full in *Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2007-08*, available on the Australian Government website at: <www.budget.gov.au>.

Contribution of Administered Programs to Outcome 14

Program 14.1: Health Emergency Planning and Response

The Health Emergency Planning and Response program provides funding to prepare for, and respond to, national public health emergencies such as communicable disease outbreaks, terrorism or natural disaster. This will be achieved through acquiring and maintaining a strategic reserve of medical equipment, supplies and pharmaceuticals which can be rapidly deployed to support the first line public health response. The program also maintains the expert infrastructure required to provide high level policy advice to the Australian Government, and State and Territory governments, on preparing for a health emergency, and the capability to coordinate the national response through a National Incident Room and appropriate national advisory structures. The contribution to this outcome will be measured by the effectiveness of the national response to a public health emergency.

Program 14.2: Surveillance

The Surveillance program funds a range of activities to inform the Australian Government of the burden of communicable diseases nationally, regionally and internationally, and interventions to protect the safety of all Australians. The contribution to this outcome will be measured by the effectiveness of initiatives in detecting emerging diseases, within Australia at the state and territory levels, at the national level and also within the Asia-Pacific region. The ability to respond rapidly to contain outbreaks of communicable diseases through appropriate collaborative networks will also be a measure of success.

Contribution of Departmental Outputs to Outcome 14

The Department describes its core activities in terms of two output groups: policy advice and program management. Outcome 14 reports on both output groups. Refer to Section 3.1 for more information on output groups.

Performance Information for Outcome 14

Performance information for administered programs, individual outputs and output groups relating to Outcome 14 are summarised in Table 3.2.14.

Table 3.2.14: Key Performance Information for Outcome 14

Performance Information for Administered Programs

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
Administered Funding – Biosecurity and Emergency Response Programs		
Containment of disease outbreaks and biosecurity incidents.	Timely engagement of national health coordination mechanisms and implementation of response plans. Timely and appropriate deployment of the National Medical Stockpile.	Impact of disease or biosecurity incident on the community mitigated.
Use of biological agents for terrorist purposes limited.	Registration of facilities working with identified biological agents and compliance with mandatory standards.	100% of facilities registered.
Effective surveillance, analysis and management of incidents of domestic and international communicable and foodborne diseases.	Reporting of communicable and foodborne disease outbreaks within agreed protocols.	Impact of communicable and foodborne disease is reduced.
Detection and review of communicable disease incidents and outbreaks.	Timely notification and analysis of national data. Acceptance of revised Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza.	Early and accurate analysis of national data. State and Territory governments endorse the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza through the Australian Health Protection Committee.
Enhanced national approaches to environmental health hazards.	Acceptance of forward-looking national environmental health priorities.	Agreement by the states and territories to national environmental health priorities.
Cost: \$51.941m		

Performance Information for Departmental Outputs

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
Output Group 1 – Policy Advice		
Quality, relevant and timely advice for Australian Government decision-making.	Ministerial satisfaction.	Maintain or increase from previous year.
Timeliness and relevance of evidence-based policy research.	Recent evidence-based research available to support policy advice.	Advice to the Minister supported by up-to-date scientific, clinical and other evidence.
Price: \$10.856m		

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
Output Group 2 – Program Management		
Administered budget predictions are met and actual expenses vary less than 0.5% from budgeted expenses.	Percentage that actual expenses vary from budgeted expenses.	0.5% variance from budgeted expenses.
Stakeholders participate in program development and implementation.	Opportunities provided for stakeholder participation through consultations, forums, meetings and surveys.	All relevant stakeholders consulted during program development and implementation phases.
Price: \$12.501m		

Evaluations

The Department does not plan to undertake any evaluations under Outcome 14 in 2007-08.

Major Reviews

The Department does not plan to undertake any major reviews under Outcome 14 in 2007-08.