

Question On Notice

Tuesday, 9 June 2020

2974. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

I refer to question on notice 2461, relating to Agricultural Protection Board (APB) workers exposed to 2, 4, 5-T in the course of their standard duties, under the Board's direct instructions, and the answers supplied to that question, and I ask:

- (a) have the recommendations from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, as per the Minister's response to question on notice 2461(b), been finalised:
 - (i) if yes to (a), can the Minister please table the recommendations;
 - (ii) if yes to (a), which, if any, recommendations have been implemented to date;
 - (iii) if no to (a), why have these recommendations not been finalised after some nine months; and
 - (iv) what progress has been made in a general sense:
 - (A) in relation to the number of claims;
 - (B) in relation to payments of those claims referred to at (a)(iv)(A);
 - (C) in relation to the nature of the cancers that have been associated with the use of 2, 4, 5-T; and
 - (D) in relation to what screening methods might be available for those cancers referred to at (a)(iv)(C);
- (b) noting that the 2004 register was intended as a working document, what was the total number of persons on that register; and
- (c) noting that the 2004 register was intended as a working document, how many persons on that register has since passed as a result of their illness?

Answer

a) Yes.

i) The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development recommended that I *do not support establishing a program to monitor the health of former APB workers exposed to chemical herbicides between 1975-1985.* I am advised this recommendation is consistent with the findings of the report of the expert medical panel headed by Professor Bruce Armstrong, which did not recommend health monitoring for former APB workers on the grounds it was not likely to be helpful in reducing mortality. I have sought further information from the Department.

ii) N/A

iii) N/A

iv)

(A) 74 claims have been lodged in respect of 2,4,5-T exposure amongst former APB workers, of which 4 are active claims that have been pended with no decision yet made as to acceptance of liability.

(B) Nine claims have been settled resulting in payments to claimants.

(C) Claims have been settled for cancer of the prostate, mouth, jaw, esophagus, colon and caecum/liver.

(D) National population based screening programs have been established for bowel cancer, breast cancer and cervical cancer under the Australian Government Department of Health Population Based Screening Framework. Of these, the only program that would have any practical utility for former APB workers who undertook weed spraying between 1975-1985, is bowel cancer screening, given that most if not all of these workers were men. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program already offers free, two-yearly screening to all Australians aged 50-74 which is expected to capture the vast majority of former workers in this cohort. Population based screening for other forms of cancer have not been recommended under the national framework at this time.

(b) 326.

(c) unknown.

Q