

NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic

29 June 2020 Hearing

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION 1 – NSW Health Pathology

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: All right. I have given you an answer. Do you have any other questions or is that it?

The CHAIR: Indeed I do. Were there flow-on effects to the public health response arising from the server outage?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: No.

The CHAIR: There were not?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: No.

The CHAIR: There were no backlogs, there were no delays?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I just said to you there was a delay in that the medical records obviously had to be used manually, there were some delays in the pathology but the results were up and running I think within 24 hours or 36 hours. I do not know what the point is but do you want to answer the question, Dr Chant?

Dr CHANT: I am just seeking clarification but my understanding is the specimens were still being processed, as in the tests were still being performed. There were issues with loading the results, but the process is that we would be notified immediately of any positive results from our laboratories if there may have been delays in just getting through the negative results and the return of those. But that is my understanding of the situation. I would need to check. I am just seeking confirmation from Tracey McCosker, the head of pathology, but that was my understanding.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: So we will take it on notice and we will tell you, but there are no great dramas. Can we get back to the questions we are here for because it is getting to be a bit of a waste of time?

ANSWER

On Monday 22 June 2020, a major power outage in the main NSW Government Data Centre impacted several government systems, including some used by NSW Health Pathology.

During the outage, all patient samples including all COVID-19 samples continued to be processed, consistent with standard business continuity plans. Results were manually recorded and processed at a number of laboratories.

While there were minor delays, testing and reporting processes returned to normal on 23 June 2020. Positive results are always prioritised and public health clinicians are notified immediately.

QUESTION 2 – Health Protection

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It has symptoms that are similar to Kawasaki and toxic shock syndrome. I think it has a very long title. Is there any update on its emergence in New South Wales or Australia and on what our response would be?

Dr CHANT: Pleasingly, it is a very rare disease. Dr Kristine Macartney participates in a paediatrics surveillance system across the nation. That has been set up and we have also contributed funding for that surveillance system. It is pleasing to see that we have not got any cases of that in New South Wales but, obviously, as I said, it is a rare condition. But we are very well linked in to experts at the national centre and Dr Kristine Macartney who is keeping us updated about all international developments.

The CHAIR: And no cases locally at all?

Dr CHANT: No cases locally of that disease, that syndrome. Can I just clarify: That is in relation to New South Wales. I am commenting on New South Wales.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you aware of any in the rest of the country? Are there any more developments? I understand it is very rare. I raise it because I have had it raised with me by parents who are concerned about the emergence of it overseas. So I want to know whether there are any more developments. I know the National Cabinet said it was going to look into it as well. Are there any more developments?

Dr CHANT: There are no more developments other than there has been more published evidence about the outcomes and our clinicians are, obviously, working with colleagues internationally to look at how, if we had a case, they would be most effectively treated. It is pleasing to see many of the cases internationally have also recovered. I think that we need to say we need to remain vigilant for it and we have the surveillance system to continue to learn but, most importantly, our clinicians need to link in with clinicians internationally who are seeing it so that, should we end up with a case, we can offer the best treatment. But, obviously, we are also attempting to suppress COVID transmission to the lowest possible levels.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Ms Houssos, I do not think there have been any cases in Australia because they have not been brought to my attention. Dr Chant, do you think there have been, or will we check it out?

Dr CHANT: Oh, look—

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We will check it out and find out for you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be great, thank you.

ANSWER

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has considered advice from several groups regarding the condition provisionally named Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome Temporally associated with SARS-COV-2 (PIMS-TS). PIMS-TS is a newly described condition in children with features that overlap with Kawasaki Disease. Cases are monitored through the National Paediatric Active Enhanced Disease Surveillance Network.

There have been no cases of Kawasaki disease or PIMS-TS associated with COVID-19 in Australia.

NSW Health have advised that the overall risk for any severe COVID-19 outcomes in children in the Australian context remains extremely low.