

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-310

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: CHEMICALS USED IN HYDRAULIC FRACTURING FOR COAL SEAM GAS

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Waters

Question:

Please supply details of the assessment program that will be undertaken on chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing for coal seam gas following the funding announcement of early 2012. Will there be any opportunity for public comment at any stage of the process?

Answer:

The assessment will be conducted in a number of stages. Stage 1 consists of human health and environmental risk assessments of the chemicals associated with hydraulic fracturing from potential exposure during surface handling of the chemicals such as site spills, overflows, runoff, and leaks from surface ponds. The chemicals encompass those used in drilling and hydraulic fracturing. These assessments will be informed by information provided by industry and that obtained from public literature. A set of Risk Simulator Modeling Tools will be developed and used for predicting environmental concentrations of the chemicals in soil and shallow groundwater.

Laboratory studies will be undertaken to identify the geogenic contaminants associated with coal seam gas operations in Australia. In addition, prediction of hydraulic fracture growth for Australian coal and development of simplified simulators to predict environmental concentrations in deep groundwater will be undertaken.

It is envisaged that the draft assessment report will be released for public comment prior to finalisation.