

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

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

Question: E12-312

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: CHEMICALS USED IN MINING FOR COAL SEAM GAS

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Waters

Question:

Please describe the process that would need to occur in order to conduct an assessment of the interaction of chemicals as part of the fracking fluid mixtures, the 'cocktail effect' and its impact on the environmental and human health. Please outline what steps are being taken to identify suitable methodologies to allow such an assessment and whether those steps are being funded.

Answer:

The risk assessment of chemicals associated with coal seam gas will consider the risks arising from the individual chemical entities used in drilling and coal seam gas fracturing. The assessments will also determine the fate and behaviour of the chemicals in the receiving environments. The risk assessment methodology to be used by National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) is internationally accepted and consistent with that developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

A validated methodology has not yet been developed for the assessment of any interaction of the chemicals. NICNAS uses its existing funding to maintain close liaison with relevant international bodies (such as OECD and WHO) and comparable regulatory agencies internationally, and would become aware of the development of such methodologies through these networks.