

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001468

OUTCOME: 7 - Health Infrastructure, Regulation, Safety and Quality

Topic: The National Assessment of Chemicals Associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Waters, Larissa

Question:

Further to the Department's response to Estimates Question on Notice SQ14-000628 of Budget Estimates 2014, please advise:

- a) How it is consistent the Department has a statement on its website that "small amounts" of chemicals injected underground during fracking remain underground, and yet in the Department's response to this Question, the Department was unable to provide information substantiating that statement, stating that this matter is still being investigated.
- b) Does the Department have any credible information on the volume or weight of chemicals injected underground each time a CSG well is fracked? Please provide details, and sources for this information.
- c) Can the Department advise how many CSG wells have been approved for development in Australia to date, and the cumulative amount of chemicals that will be injected underground as part of these approved fracking activities?

Answer:

- a) Information in published literature indicates that up to 60 per cent of the hydraulic fracture fluid volume is returned to the surface (Golder & Associates 2010, available at http://www.santos.com/library/Roma_Shallow_Gas_East_EMP_AppD.pdf). This information will be investigated in the National Chemicals Assessment.
- b) The Commonwealth conditions of approval require the reporting of the constituents of fracking systems, not the volume or weight of constituents.
- c) The Department of Health understands that up to 29,260 coal seam gas wells have been approved under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to date, but that the cumulative amount of chemicals has not been calculated.