

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001470

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

Topic: Fracking Chemicals

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Waters, Larissa

Question:

- a) In response to a QoN asked by Senator Waters, 'published peer reviewed info' on how fracking will work in Australia (aquifer connectivity etc) – was available at time CSG projects were approved. That's good news - please provide a detailed list of these publications.
- b) Has the Department ever undertaken a cost assessment of what it would cost businesses or governments to undo the environmental or health impacts of a CSG project, particularly caused by contamination from fracking chemicals, that the Department has approved or may, whether this impact was caused by normal practises, or by an accident?
- c) Has the Department conducted a risk-based assessment of what might go wrong, considering the large outstanding uncertainties about this industry?
- d) What kinds of findings have you made? How do you manage uncertainty in these assessments?
- e) Is the Department aware of anyone within Government who are modelling these kinds of costs? Who?

Answer:

- a) The Department of the Environment has published three reports listing published, peer reviewed information on the water related impacts of Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and coal development on the Department's website <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications>. The reports cover Australian and international research from 2000-2013.
- b) No.
- c) The risks associated with chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing are being assessed by the National CSG Chemicals Assessment.
- d) The findings in this risk assessment, including an explanation of the management of uncertainties in the assessment, will be published once the report has been finalised.
- e) No.