Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 163

Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 4

Programme: Science

Topic: DESKTOP REVIEW UNDERTAKEN BY SKM

Hansard Page: 93

Question Date: 20 October 2014

Question Type: Spoken

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: To the extent that the questions go to bore wells failing, can you advise me on whether there are conditions that have been placed on projects that relate to the monitoring of bores in the long term? That is given that often project have a particular life span and then water improvements do not show up until decades afterwards.
Mr Gaddes: Yes. The CSG projects that have been approved up until now have quite detailed water management plans associated with them. They will deal with things like what happens if a well blows out and things like that. In terms of the specific requirements under each project, it is a little bit complicated because some of the projects were approved prior to the water trigger and some were approved afterwards under different conditions. If you wanted to know about the specific conditions for each project, we would have to take that on notice.
Senator WATERS: I am more interested in the research gaps that that desktop review identified and whether anyone is now filling those gaps. Perhaps I will put those on notice.
Senator Birmingham: We will take that on notice for the officials from the Office of Water Science.
Senator WATERS: Yes, and if anyone can answer whether or not there has been any equivalent studies done on shale and tight gas.
Mr Gaddes: We will take that on notice.

Answer:

The Office of Water Science Background review on Bore Integrity was commissioned on the advice of the IESC and is available at http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications. The report found that:

- Bore integrity depends on good bore design, appropriate selection of construction materials and a high standard of cementing.
- In Australia, different types of bores are regulated under different legislation. Existing guidelines and regulations provide frameworks to establish bore integrity; driller and operator compliance is essential.
- Opportunities for future research include more detailed assessments of the frequency of, mechanisms for and consequences of bore integrity failure.
- Monitoring and reporting of bore and well integrity across all industries will be important to provide information needed to assess bore integrity and to act if there are issues.

A Knowledge Project on Monitoring and Management of Bore Integrity has delivered two milestone reports to the Department. The Department is now considering the need for further analytical work to inform the merits of a potential future field monitoring study.

The Department is not aware of equivalent studies done on on-shore shale and tight gas wells. The current state of work on bore integrity is referenced in the IESC's three reference lists for water-related coal seam gas and coal mining research. A fourth reference list will be published in early 2015.