

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

Question No: 97
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Topic: CSG BORE WELL INTEGRITY
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 29 October 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

On what basis did the Department approve so many CSG projects without waiting until this information was available so you could make an informed decision when possible bore failure would impact MNES and Australian farming communities?

Answer:

As for any environmental approval, decisions are made using the best available science and information available at the time. As scientific information improves, this new information is then also taken into account.

Coal seam gas approvals under national environment law are subject to detailed conditions to mitigate any risks associated with bore failure. The approval conditions under national environment law require detailed Water Monitoring and Management Plans to be approved by the Minister. These plans include commitments to construct bores consistent with the *Minimum Construction Requirements for Water Bores in Australia, Ed 3, Revised February 2012* (National Uniform Drillers Licensing Committee).

The water plans also require risk assessments to determine potential leakage paths due to poor bore integrity as well as groundwater quality and quantity monitoring using best practice bore monitoring networks across project areas. The Minister may also direct a proponent to cease water or gas extraction if groundwater quality triggers or groundwater level triggers are exceeded.

Additionally, Coal Seam Gas projects in Queensland are subject to conditions requiring gas wells to be constructed in accordance with the *Queensland Code of Practice for Construction and Abandoning CSG wells*. Bores in artesian basins must be constructed consistent with the *Minimum Standards for the Construction, and Reconditioning of Water Bores that Intersect the Sediments of Artesian Basins in Queensland, DEHP March 2012*.