

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

Question No: 63
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 4
Programme: Science
Topic: Independent Expert Scientific Committee - Concerns
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 21 October 2015
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

1. What are the main concerns raised by the scientific committee?

Answer:

1. Since its establishment in 2011, the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (the IESC) has provided 87 pieces of advice to Australian Government and state government regulators. Across this advice, the IESC has identified a number of common themes relevant to the types of activities it considers. These include:
 - the adequacy of baseline data
 - the integration of hydrogeological and ecological conceptualisations
 - the robustness of modelling
 - the interconnectivity of surface water and groundwater
 - the importance of understanding the cumulative effects of multiple developments on regional surface water and groundwater systems.

As part of its role in helping to ensure decisions are informed by the best available science, the IESC has published Information Guidelines. The Guidelines were initially published in March 2013 and were most recently updated in October 2015 following a review undertaken in consultation with Australian Government and state government regulators and public comment through the IESC website. These Guidelines outline the information considered necessary to enable the IESC to provide robust scientific advice to government regulators on the water-related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining development proposals. The Information Guidelines are available at <http://www.iesc.environment.gov.au/>.