

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-15
23 October 2014

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY

TOPIC: Building Standards

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 23/10/14, page 124)

QUESTION No.: SI 66

Senator KETTER: My first line of questioning goes to the issue of building standards. I am referring to media reports in respect of substandard electrical cable which was imported, in particular an article in The Australian Financial Review of 18 September entitled 'Dodgy materials dog building industry'. The article reports:

Parliamentary secretary to the industry minister Bob Baldwin, himself a former building inspector, said the government was determined to do something to stop the problem. "We're just trying to match up with stakeholders ... as to the who, what, where, when and why."

Can you please outline where the government is up to in relation to that?

Mr Chesworth: The regulation of things such as electrical cable does not actually fall within the department nor with the Australian Building Codes Board. There are some COAG processes in place, such as the building ministers forum and those sorts of things, which may be where the reference came from. Certainly agencies, such as the ACCC, state fair trading bodies and other bodies, may have an interest in this area. Unfortunately, I think I will have to take that on notice and provide some information on exactly who is responsible for these areas.

ANSWER

The Australian Government is aware of the concerns relating to substandard electrical cables. Addressing this issue is primarily a matter for states and territories. In particular, the building conformance framework for building products centres primarily on the constitutional authority granted to state and territory governments through consumer protection legislation.

There is also scope for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to investigate matters, such as significant public interest or industry-wide conduct, through its compliance and enforcement policy.

Information on what the ACCC has done to address the cabling issue mentioned in Senator Ketter's question can be found at <https://www.accc.gov.au/update/infinity-electrical-cable-recall>