

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Budget Estimates, May 2013

<b>Program: Division:</b>	2.1: EQD	<b>Question No:</b>	047
<b>Topic:</b>	SGGs – Details of correspondence provided to insurance companies		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	86/87 (28/05/13)		

**Senator Milne asked:**

Dr Wright: In addition, we have formally written to the insurance companies to raise this matter with them, because usually with the write-off of vehicles it is a matter that the insurance companies need to be aware of and deal with, so we have sought to engage with them to deal with it at that point in the chain.

Senator MILNE: What have you asked the insurance companies to do?

Dr Wright: I do not have the correspondence with me. I would need to check and take that on notice.

Mr Thompson: We are happy to take that on notice.

Senator MILNE: Can you take that on notice? Essentially, while all the vehicles are parked side by side before they go to auction would be the most appropriate place to do it; when they are all there, and you could do it in the most cost-effective way, rather than when it gets to your individual recyclers and whatever. All it would require is some pressure on the insurance companies to get them to agree that these vehicles all have to be degassed prior to auction, consistent with the law. Why hasn't that happened?

Senator MILNE: When did you write to the insurance companies?

Dr Wright: Unfortunately, I do not have those details with me but we are happy to take it on notice.

**Answer:**

The *Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989* and associated regulations (OPSGGM legislation) covers technicians who work on equipment containing hydrofluorocarbon refrigerants, including car air conditioning systems. The Australian Refrigeration Council administers the refrigeration and air conditioning licensing scheme, which covers technicians, on behalf of the Australian Government.

On 22 May 2012, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities wrote to the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) to promote compliance with the OPSGGM legislation as it relates to degassing cars. Contacts for the Australian Refrigeration Council and details on where to find further information on the refrigeration and air conditioning licensing scheme and the OPSGGM legislation were provided.

On 17 April 2013, the Australian Refrigeration Council met with the ICA to further discuss obligations under the OPSGGM legislation, including potential penalties for the release of refrigerants listed under the Act and the risks to insurers and crash repairers if technicians conducting refrigeration and air conditioning work are not licensed.

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<b>Program: Division:</b>	2.1: EQD	<b>Question No:</b>	048
<b>Topic:</b>	Rotterdam Convention - Funding		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	89 (28/05/13)		

**Senator Singh asked:**

Senator SINGH: Thank you. On a related matter of administration, according to the current status of contributions to the general trust fund of the operational budget of the Rotterdam Convention Australia has not paid its assessed contribution pledges from prior to 2012. Is that correct?

Mr McNee: No, I do not think that is accurate. I will take that on notice, but as far as I am aware we are fully up to date. In fact, we would not have been able to participate actively in the meeting.

**Answer:**

Australia is fully up to date with its contributions to the Trust Fund of the Rotterdam Convention. The Rotterdam Convention secretariat prepared budget papers for the last meeting of the governing body to the Convention, the Conference of the Parties, which met in May 2013. Document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.6/INF/17, which is available online from the Convention's webpage, outlines the status of every contribution from every country. Annex III of the document lists, in line 5, the relevant status of Australia's contributions as follows:

- Pledges for 2012: USD \$52,256
- Collections during 2011 for 2012 and future years: USD \$52,256
- Unpaid pledges for 2011 and prior years: 0
- Unpaid pledges for 2012: 0
- Unpaid pledges for prior years, 2011 and 2012: 0

Further, Annex IV lists that unpaid contributions by country for the Rotterdam Convention Trust Fund from 2005 to 2012. Australia is not listed in Annex IV as it has no unpaid contributions.



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**Program: Division:** 2.1: EQD **Question No:** 049  
**Topic:** SGGs – Advice on reminder notices  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** 93  
**or Written Question:** (28/05/13)

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Senator BIRMINGHAM: How many written reminders from the department would they have received between their failure to lodge and the department proceeding with court action?

Dr Wright: We have standard operating procedures on the steps involved as you escalate compliance. We do not have the specific details for you in the room.

Mr Dadswell: There are reminder notices as I said, before and afterwards, and indeed one of the last steps we do is to send a letter by registered post that guarantees it is delivered. Only after we get no response to that do we consider further action such as injunctive action.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Have the court orders been granted?

Mr Dadswell: I am not sure. I am sorry, I am going to have to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

How many written reminders from the department would they have received between their failure to lodge and the department proceeding with court action?

Licence holders under the *Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989* are sent three automatically generated email notifications from the Online Licensing and Reporting System (OLaRS) before the commencement of and during each reporting period advising them of their obligation to submit a quarterly report before the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the reporting period.

At the end of the reporting period, if a licence holder has not submitted their quarterly report by the due date, licence holders are sent two warning letters via registered post requesting immediate submission of their outstanding reports.

In these cases, phone calls were made to the licence holders to confirm receipt of the warning letters.

Have the court orders been granted?

Four of the six licence holders who failed to submit a quarterly report before the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the July to September 2012, October to December 2012 and/or January to March 2013 reporting periods have since submitted their outstanding quarterly reports. Federal Court injunctions will no longer be pursued against these licence holders.

Applications are being prepared for two licence holders. It is anticipated that these applications will be lodged with the courts by 14 June 2013.

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**Program: Division:** 2.1: EQD **Question No:** 050  
**Topic:** CRIS Woodheaters - reducing emissions from wood heaters  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Di Natale asked:**

The Commonwealth Government recently published a Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement for reducing emissions from wood heaters, which states that Australian wood heaters emit an estimated 40,000 tonnes of particulate air pollution every year, with estimated health costs of \$263,000 per tonne for emissions in capital cities, and \$111,300 per tonne in smaller regional cities.

1. Given these figures would the Department agree with the assertion that these figures imply a total estimated health burden of \$20 to \$24 billion for woodsmoke pollution in Australia over the next 20 years?

a. If the Department disagrees with this figure please provide an alternate estimate for the estimated health burden of woodsmoke pollution in Australia over the next 20 years based on relevant figures from the Regulatory Impact Statement, and please fully explain the methodology and assumptions used to arrive at this figure.

b. Does the Department agree with the assertion that an accurate estimate or projection of the health burden of wood heaters would enhance public understanding of the proposals in the Federal Government's wood heater Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement?

c. If, despite the detailed projections of health costs in the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement, the Department asserts that estimates of the health burden of wood heaters cannot be quantified, can the Department please describe what additional calculations and inputs would be required to quantify this?

2. When drafting the Commonwealth Regulatory Impact Statement was the Department aware of the NSW Woodsmoke Control Options report (available at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/woodsmoke/smokecontrolopts.htm>)?

a. If not why not?

b. If so, how did the findings of this Report inform the drafting of the Regulatory Impact Statement? Were these findings incorporated into the draft at all? Please provide concrete examples if so.

3. Does the Department agree that the analysis performed in the NSW Woodsmoke Control Options report is similar, applicable and relevant to the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement?

a. Did the Department consult with the authors of the NSW Woodsmoke Control Options report? Please provide a detailed summary of any such consultations and please provide evidence that these consultations occurred.

b. Is the Department aware that the NSW Woodsmoke Control Options report found that the 3 most cost-effective woodsmoke control options in NSW (these measures being 1) phasing out wood heaters when houses are sold, 2) not allowing new wood heaters to be installed and 3) introducing wood heater licencing fees) could reduce the health costs of woodsmoke pollution in NSW by about 75%? And that they would likely achieve similar benefits for the whole of Australia, i.e. reduce Australian health costs by nearly \$1 billion per year? Why was this information omitted from the Regulatory Impact Statement?

4. Has the Department considered, been asked to consider, or performed any modelling on any of the following measures (please table any such modelling, reports or other like documents if they exist):

a. introducing a strict health-based standard for wood heater

b. providing industry assistance to develop new wood heaters to satisfy a health-based standard?

c. introducing a moratorium on the installation of wood heaters that do not meet the health-based standard?

d. introducing a National Woodsmoke Education program and providing assistance to develop and promote other affordable home heating methods such as solar air heaters, pellet heaters and heat pumps?

**Answer:**

1. The Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement for reducing emissions from wood heaters (Consultation RIS) was prepared and released for public consultation by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Standing Council on Environment and Water (SCEW) on 11 April 2013. The Consultation RIS reflects the agreed position of the COAG jurisdictions and is not a Commonwealth RIS.

The Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) reviewed the COAG Consultation RIS to determine whether it met COAG guidelines for regulatory impact analyses. OBPR considered it gave sufficient detail for the public consultation phase of the regulatory impact analysis.

The public consultation process was completed on 15 July 2013 and has identified additional information that will assist in the further assessment of the options that were outlined in the COAG Consultation RIS that could be undertaken to reduce harmful wood heater emissions. These options will be presented to the SCEW for consideration through a Decision RIS process.

2. The analysis undertaken by the independent consultant for the COAG Consultation RIS was completed prior to the Economic Appraisal of Wood Smoke Control Measures report, commissioned by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, being released. The Economic Appraisal of Wood Smoke Control Measures report, and a number of other reports and information, have been identified through the consultation process and/or generated since the release of the COAG Consultation RIS. These documents will inform SCEW's consideration of options through a Decision RIS process.

3. See response to Question 2.

4. See response to Question 2. The public consultation process on the COAG Consultation RIS has identified additional information that will further inform SCEW in the context of considering the Decision RIS.

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**Program: Division:** EQD **Question No:** 211  
**Topic:** Consultation RIS on woodheaters  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Rhiannon asked:**

- a. Did the federal government's Consultation RIS on woodheater pollution RIS process request any federal health agency input about health care costs from wood smoke emissions to inform a national policy or regulatory framework around reducing emissions from wood heaters?
- b. Is there any such data or recorded concerns available via the Department's data collection sources?
- c. What recommendations would the Department of Health urge on this issue?
- d. What are the estimated national health costs caused by woodsmoke, from health professionals' point of view?
- e. What information and advice about this issue is being sought from health professionals by the Department, notwithstanding the current Senate Inquiry into Air Quality?
- f. What actions would federal health agencies want to see to reduce the physical and economic health costs of woodsmoke?

**Answer:**

The Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement for reducing emissions from wood heaters (Consultation RIS) was prepared and released for public consultation by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Standing Council on Environment and Water (SCEW) on 11 April 2013. The Consultation RIS reflects the agreed position of the COAG jurisdictions and is not a Commonwealth RIS.

The Commonwealth provided whole-of-government input into the COAG Consultation RIS with relevant portfolios, including the Department of Health and Ageing, given an opportunity to make comment. A number of parts of the question go to the views of the Department of Health and Ageing and would be best directed to that agency.

The Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) reviewed the Consultation RIS to determine whether it met COAG guidelines for regulatory impact analyses. OBPR considered it gave sufficient detail for the public consultation phase of the regulatory impact analysis.

The public consultation process was completed on 15 July 2013 and has identified additional information that will assist in the further assessment of the options that were outlined in the Consultation RIS that could be undertaken to reduce harmful wood heater emissions. These options will be presented to the SCEW for consideration through a Decision RIS process.



In 2011 COAG identified air quality as a Priority Issue of National Significance and agreed that the COAG SCEW would develop a National Plan for Clean Air to improve air quality, and community health and well being, to be delivered to COAG by the end of 2014. The National Plan for Clean Air represents a strategic approach to air quality management.

The plan will bring together Commonwealth, state and territory action to reduce the risk of health impacts from air pollution. The priority for the first stage of the development of the National Plan for Clean Air is on particle pollution. This priority recognises that current population exposure to particulate matter needs to be addressed and that significant health benefits can be achieved. The public statement on the development of the national plan for clean air is available at: [www.scew.gov.au/coag-strategic-priorities/national-plan-clean-air](http://www.scew.gov.au/coag-strategic-priorities/national-plan-clean-air).