

.Senate Economics Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates 30 May — 1 June 2006

Question: bet 118 (ACCC)

Topic: Recall of baby dummies

Hansard Page: E60

Senator FIELDING asked:

Now that the minister is back, I would like to hold off on that issue and go back to the issue of the dummies. Minister, will the government be issuing a recall of these dangerous products from the market?

Senator Coonan—I am sorry; I had an urgent phone call that I had to take, I will take on notice what the government will do and ask the minister. I do note that a review of product safety is being undertaken by the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs. No doubt, it picks up some of the issues to which you allude. I understand that the minister has asked the ACCC to look into the particular matter that you have raised. But so that you can have a proper answer, I will ask the minister.

Senator FIELDING—Will the government commit to making the Australian standards mandatory? I would hate to see a death happen to get some real teeth into this issue.

Senator COONAN—This is an important issue and I will certainly raise it with the minister and give you a considered answer.

Answer:

The ACCC is undertaking a comprehensive study of dummy safety, and has arranged for testing of a range of dummies to both the Australian Standard and the European Standard. The ACCC will recommend appropriate action if any unsafe dummies are identified.

Searches on available Australian databases have not identified any deaths or serious injuries caused by babies' dummies. A number of recent consumer reports have focussed on the hazard of babies getting dummies completely into their mouths. The hazard is recognised in dummy safety standards and is addressed by the requirement for breathing holes in the dummy shield.

The ACCC has requested Standards Australia to review the Australian Standard for dummies as a matter of urgency. In the interim, the ACCC will continue its investigation into dummy safety. The introduction of a mandatory standard is among a number of possibilities under consideration.