

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Senate Estimates

2 June 2009

Question: BR-9

Topic: Coal Mining

Proof Hansard Page: E37 - 38

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—I would like to go back to the coalmining sector. Has the department done any analysis of the methane emissions of each individual coalmine in Australia? If so, which one vents the most, and do we have a league table of the total amount leaked by fugitive or other means?

Mr Clarke—I have seen such a league table, but my advice is that it was submitted to us by industry. Your literal question was: does the department have such an analysis that is independent of one provided by industry or that comes from an independent statistical source? The answer is: not to my knowledge. But such analyses are being done. It is possible that, because of the obvious impact through to the CPRS, such data would be held in the Department of Climate Change, but I cannot offer you more than that.

Senator ABETZ—To your knowledge, has the Department of Climate Change consulted with your department to determine methane venting by coalmines?

Mr Clarke—Yes. We are in consultation with DCC on that matter because it goes to the CCAF element of the package. Of course, it has to be observed that an analysis of all Australian emissions has been something that successive governments have been undertaking for many years in terms of the carbon-accounting obligations under the UNFCCC. There has been analysis; how much of it is data and how much of it is modelling I cannot confirm. But there has certainly been analysis of coalmine methane for many years. I am sure that analysis exists somewhere in government.

Senator ABETZ—Could you please take it on notice. If you have it, provide it; otherwise, do me a favour and find out which department has it and then flick-pass the question to that department. That would be most helpful. Also, has the industry chart or league table been publicly disclosed to your knowledge?

Mr Clarke—I do not know but I am happy to take on notice whatever is on the public record or in the government data on that.

Senator ABETZ—If you are at liberty to disclose that league table to us, please do so. If you are allowed to disclose it and do so, could you advise us whether you have any opinion to share in relation to the robustness of the league tables.

Answer:

The Department of Climate Change estimates fugitive greenhouse gas emissions from coal mining activities in the process of producing Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts. The accounts form the basis of Australia's official submission to the United Nations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

National estimates of fugitive emissions from coal mines are derived from confidential company data, supplemented with data published by companies, where available. Consequently, the Department of Climate Change does not publish emissions by individual mine due to confidentiality constraints.

The Department of Climate Change does publish fugitive emissions from coal mines by state and by mine type – open cut, underground or decommissioned - in the National Greenhouse Accounts. The Accounts are available online at: <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/inventory/index.html>.

In developing the Coal Sector Adjustment Scheme, the Department of Climate Change referred to data compiled for the National Greenhouse Accounts. A chart showing the emissions intensity range of coal mines in Australia is contained in Box 12.8 of the CPRS White Paper. However, to protect commercial confidentiality, the names and operators of individual mines cannot be published and the data in this chart has been aggregated to prevent the identification of any individual mine.