

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 20/31 May 2011

Question: E11- 003

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: NANOTECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Xenophon asked:

Given the research showing potential health risks, does the Department acknowledge that consumers have a right to know whether the products they are using include ingredients or components derived through nanotechnology?

Answer:

Food Standards Australia New Zealand , the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme and, the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator undertake a comprehensive risk assessment of products regardless of whether they contain nanomaterials or use ingredients derived through nanotechnology. Therefore, products on the market in Australia have been assessed by the relevant regulator as not presenting health risks.

Nevertheless, the Department is aware of consumers' concerns in relation to products that may use nanomaterials or may be derived using nanotechnology.

These concerns were raised most recently in relation to food products in the course of the independent Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy, commissioned by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council. The Ministerial Council is currently developing a whole-of-government response to the recommendations of the Review Report (Labelling Logic), including recommendations relating to labelling foods or ingredients derived from new technologies. The Ministerial Council expects to consider its response at its December 2011 meeting.

The Department is also aware of similar concerns raised by certain consumer groups in relation to the use of nanotechnology in sunscreens.