

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-012

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: Global Legally Binding Instrument on Mercury

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Heffernan

Question:

- a) Could the Department provide budget estimations for investigations into the effects of widespread mercury pollution on the Australian population over the next 10 years? If not, why not?
- b) Can the Department identify which current health standards will need to be adapted or amended to comply with technical guidelines (now in their 7th revision) of the Globally Binding Mercury Instrument and the projected costs of this work? If not, why not - please provide details?
- c) Can the Department outline its public health information and training programs that will be introduced following the finalisation of the Globally Binding Mercury Instrument and the projected cost of these programs? If not, please provide details?

Answer:

- a) –c)
The Department of Health and Ageing provides advice to assist the negotiations of the *Global Legally Binding Instrument on Mercury* (the mercury treaty) when requested by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. The negotiating position has been developed through a Whole-of-Government approach to ensure that Australia's interests, including economic, environmental and human health interests are taken into account. Currently, the mercury treaty is being developed through negotiations and no agreement has been reached. Thus, the Department is not in a position to determine implementation obligations, budget estimations, training needs or the need for amendments to existing Australian health standards, until the outcome of the international negotiation is known.