

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: E12-282

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: Polybrominated Flame Retardants

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Di Natale

Questions:

The questions below relate to polybrominated flame retardants (PBDEs): pentabromodiphenyl ether (pentaBDE) and octabromodiphenyl ether (octaBDE). Australia supported the listing of these chemicals as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) under the Stockholm Convention in 2010. I understand that the Government is currently considering ratification under the domestic treaty making process, but immediate concerns have been raised regarding the impact of these chemicals on the population, particularly children. The Stockholm Convention Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Review Committee expressed concern that brominated flame retardants listed in the treaty could be used in recycled goods such as carpet backing. The POPRC technical review says, 'the incorporation of pentaBDE in carpet cushion which generates the highest levels of dust in the zones where children are playing is therefore of particular concern. It is notable that dust releases increases as carpet ages thus exposing the children of poorer families more heavily – an exposure reflected in the published literature'.

- a) How far advanced is the domestic treaty process including the regulation impact statement (RIS) and the National Interest Analysis?
- b) When will this process be completed?
- c) When will the decision be announced regarding ratification?
- d) What stakeholder consultation occurred so far in relation to this process?

Answers:

The following answers were provided by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities:

- a) -b)
The Regulation Impact Statement and the National Interest Analysis are under preparation and are expected to be completed in the first half of 2013.
- c) Any decision on ratification will be subjected to consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.
- d) Targeted stakeholder consultation has been undertaken on an ongoing basis, including through the Australian Government's Stockholm Reference Group.