

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 52

Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 5

Programme: Supervising Scientist Division

Topic: Australian Government Responses to UN Secretary-General's Sept 2011 Recommendation For Assessment Of Environmental And Societal Costs Of Uranium Mining

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Question Date: 18 November 2013

Question Type: Spoken

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: It probably makes more sense to have your answer in front of me, rather than this back-and-forth across the table. What steps have been taken by the Commonwealth, or any agencies, or indeed your agency, to address the UN Secretary-General's September 2011 recommendation that Australia conduct an in-depth assessment of the net cost impact of mining fissionable materials—that is, uranium—on local communities and ecosystems? It was an SG recommendation of 2011—

Mr McAllister: I am unaware of any involvement in that. I am not aware of that recommendation, either.

Senator LUDLAM: Could you rule out that OSS has done anything in response to that recommendation?

Mr McAllister: I can rule that out, yes.

Senator LUDLAM: Are you able to check for us on notice whether anybody else has done so?

Mr McAllister: I can look into it, yes.

Answer:

The *United Nations system-wide study on the implications of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant Report of the Secretary-General (UN System-Wide Study)* published on 16 August 2011 does not include a specific recommendation that Australia conduct an in-depth assessment of the net cost impact of mining fissionable materials—that is, uranium—on local communities and ecosystems. The System Wide study does include a proposal for an international level “in-depth assessment of the net cost impact of the following: potential for cost reduction; emissions; proliferation: waste disposal; local impacts of mining; and insurance against disasters”.

The Supervising Scientist is not aware of what level of engagement, if any, there has been with Australian Government agencies in relation to an international level assessment.