

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Select Committee on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances)

Inquiry into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS

5 September 2025

PDR Number: IQ25-000089

Resourcing required to update and inform drinking water guidelines

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

3. In this inquiry, it has become quite clear that there is a critical need to better resource agencies in understanding, managing and acting on the risks of PFAS for ongoing and future measures the government needs to take. What resourcing would the NHMRC require to more readily update and inform drinking water guidelines, particularly for all the PFAS chemicals that weren't considered in the latest review?

Answer:

- NHMRC receives funding to deliver core business (which includes guidelines). The guidelines work is structured and planned so that the information on the many different threats to human health in drinking water, or from recreational water use, are periodically reviewed and updated. Information on any single substance is not constantly revised and updated.
- Costs of reviews are dependent on many factors, such as the size of the literature base, the review methods and the number of research questions.

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4. To what extent is further funding being provided to the NHMRC, for more effective regulatory review and reform to take place?

Answer:

- The functions of the CEO, as set out in Section 7 of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, includes inquiring into, issuing guidelines on, and advising and making recommendations to the Commonwealth as well as the states and territories on matters such as public health and matters relating to the improvement of health.
- This includes developing nationally consistent, evidence-based advice such as the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* that can be applied by jurisdictions throughout Australia in the context of their own administrative and legislative frameworks.
- NHMRC receives funding to deliver core business (which includes guidelines); however, no additional funding has been received specifically for review of PFAS advice.
- NHMRC is not funded for regulatory review and reform in respect to PFAS.