

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: IQ25-000092

UCSF's Strengthening the Chemical Regulatory Process and Environment Evidence-to-Decision Framework

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

1. Has your Department considered the UCSF's [Strengthening the Chemical Regulatory Process](#) and [Environment Evidence-to-Decision Framework](#)? How closely does Australia adhere to these recommended best practices for the various aspects of chemical risk assessment and regulation?

Answer:

1. The Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS) does not use the UCSF's Strengthening the Chemical Regulatory Process or Environment Evidence-to-Decision Framework. Instead, AICIS's approach to risk assessment of industrial chemicals is aligned with international standards and best practices, as set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

AICIS plays a proactive role in international scientific and regulatory forums, including those convened by the OECD. Through this, Australia contributes to the development of international standards and remains responsive to emerging risks.

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PDR Number: IQ25-000093

Group ban of all PFAS chemicals

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

2. In relation to the EU's approach to impose the group ban of around 14,000 chemicals, can you please clarify what steps would be required for a group ban like this, of all PFAS chemicals, to take effect here?

Answer:

2. This is best answered by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

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Industry's tactics that dodge regulations

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

3. The EU has had the issue where a group of chemicals are banned, but then industry makes a new set of chemicals that are very similar but not covered by this ban. What can we learn from this to ensure government is keeping up with industry's tactics to dodge regulation?

Answer:

3. Introducers (importers and manufacturers) of industrial chemicals must categorise chemical introductions and meet regulatory requirements specific to their introduction category before they can lawfully introduce industrial chemicals into Australia.

New chemicals that are categorised as medium to high risk must be assessed by the Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS) before they can be authorised for introduction into Australia. As part of an application for an assessment, applicants must submit a standard set of information, which includes information about the toxicity of the chemical. Since 2004, AICIS has required additional data in applications for higher concern PFAS chemicals. These requirements go beyond the standard package and are updated as scientific understanding evolves.

AICIS can assess chemicals individually or in groups with similar risk profiles. If specific data on an industrial chemical is unavailable, AICIS may use data from similar chemicals or apply conservative assumptions to ensure safety. AICIS can also make recommendations for groups of chemicals; however, the need for risk management must be demonstrated for each chemical.

AICIS collaborates with international regulatory bodies to monitor global trends in chemical innovation and regulatory evasion. This includes participation in joint initiatives and intelligence-sharing arrangements that enhance Australia's regulatory agility and preparedness.

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Labelling regime for PFAS content in consumer products

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

4. Has a labelling regime for PFAS content in consumer products, to give consumers the power of choice, been considered?

Answer:

4. AICIS has no role in the labelling of individual industrial chemicals or products containing industrial chemicals. This is best answered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

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PDR Number: IQ25-000096

Contamination in drinking water and waste facilities in remote First Nations communities

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

5. What is being done to understand the extent of contamination in drinking water and waste facilities in remote First Nations communities?

Answer:

5. The Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme's role in the regulation of PFAS chemicals is to assess and make risk management recommendations about risks to human health and the environment associated with the introduction (importation or manufacture) and industrial use of PFAS chemicals. AICIS is not authorised to monitor PFAS levels in drinking water and waste facilities.

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UCSF's Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment Evidence-to-Decision Framework

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

7. How does the Department's assessment of essential use for chemicals compare to the essentiality framework set out in [UCSF's Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment Evidence-to-Decision Framework](#)? Is this independently assessed, or do you rely on industry data?

Answer:

7. This is best answered by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

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PDR Number: IQ25-000099

Mandating chemicals deemed 'essential'

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

8. How do you mandate that for chemicals deemed 'essential' that industry is investing in safer alternatives?

Answer:

8. This is best answered by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

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PDR Number: IQ25-000100

enHealth statement on PFAS released in February 2024

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

1. The latest and updated enHealth statement on PFAS was released in February 2024 and that, as this is a changing environment, it is already outdated.
 - a. How often is the Department's PFAS health advice being reviewed?
 - b. When are you going to release another updated statement?

Answer:

- Advice by enHealth is updated as new evidence emerges that warrants updating that advice.
- Given the publication of the updated Australian Drinking Water Guidelines by the National Health and Medical Research Council, and the release of a number of further studies on PFAS, enHealth has recognised the need to update its guidance for PFAS.
- Updated enHealth advice on PFAS is expected to be published by the end of the year.

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PDR Number: IQ25-000101

PFAS - department's submission does not mention any links to cancer

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

2. The department's submission to this inquiry acknowledges the association between PFAS and a range of health conditions, however, it does not mention any links to cancer. Why does the Department of Health not acknowledge this important link, given that even the World Health Organisation, through its cancer agency, has classified PFOA as carcinogenic to humans and PFOS as possibly carcinogenic to humans?

Answer:

2. The department's submission to the inquiry expressly mentions the potential associations between PFAS exposure and an increased risk of two uncommon cancers, testicular and kidney cancer, on pages 5 and 15 of that submission.

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PDR Number: IQ25-000102

Wreck Bay - health screening and health service

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

3. The committee visited Wreck Bay and heard about the huge disease burden facing this community, including cancers and cardiovascular disease. There are jurisdiction issues, but this is a community that constantly falls through the cracks and still doesn't have basic health screening, despite some of the highest PFAS exposure and disease burden. What has your department done to facilitate health screening and health service provision in Wreck Bay, following the urgent calls for these in the course of this inquiry?

Answer:

- The Australian Government has an agreement with NSW Health, facilitated by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sport and the Arts, to provide health services to Jervis Bay Territory residents. These services are provided in line with the NSW Health policies, including the NSW Health Aboriginal Health Plan 2024-2034.
- As advised in IQ25-000041, through the Indigenous Australians' Health Program, the Australian Government is investing \$14.5 million over two years to support two Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in delivering primary health care, as well as maternal and child health services to the Wreck Bay community and surrounding regions.

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PDR Number: IQ25-000110

Potential benefits that blood giving can have on PFAS blood levels

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

11. In this inquiry, from various experts, we have heard about potential benefits that blood giving can have on PFAS blood levels, which is particularly important for people who have had high PFAS exposure.
- a. Is your department assessing the benefits of this measure and revising your advice around this?
 - b. For instance, if this did occur, how do we ensure that donated blood doesn't become a source of contaminating people with PFAS?

Answer:

- The department is aware Australian studies have looked at therapeutic blood and plasma donations and its effect on blood PFAS concentrations, including the Airservices Avalon Case Study and the Victorian Metropolitan Fire Brigade Macquarie University Study.
- While these studies have indicated plasma/blood donations may reduce PFAS concentration levels at a faster rate than is naturally eliminated from the body, further research is needed to evaluate the clinical implications of these findings.
- A decision to recommend therapeutic blood or plasma donation for an individual is a clinical matter and therefore requires a discussion between a patient and their relevant medical practitioner.
- On the question of donated blood and PFAS we would refer the Committee to the evidence provided by the Australian Red Cross Lifeline at the public hearing on 10 June 2025.