

Question on notice no. 97

Portfolio question number: 476

2017-18 Supplementary budget estimates

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure and Regional Development Portfolio

Senator Glenn Sterle: asked the Airservices Australia on 23 October 2017—

Mr Harfield stated at page 146 that Airservices Australia was being proactive in its management of PFAS and to mitigate the health risk to firefighters:

Mr Harfield: The issue that we have been trying to deal with is how to manage this situation where the science hasn't caught up and to manage it in a proactive way without actually setting precedents that we are not quite aware of. We're trying to be as diligent as we possibly can with the science and what the evidence is around it.

Senator STERLE: I suppose it gets to the stage now that if the firefighters start developing symptoms that Senator Gallacher talked about that are in America, where does that put Airservices? **Mr Harfield:** We are doing everything we possibly can to mitigate the risk. **Senator STERLE:** I understand that. **Mr Harfield:** We are monitoring the situation all the time and taking advice and continuing to review our protocols and monitoring.

Questions:

1. Has Airservices Australia produced any procedures or guidance to the firefighters who continue to work in PFAS contaminated sites, or with non-CASA approved foams?
2. What are the things that Airservices Australia are using to mitigate the risk?
3. Is Airservices Australia following the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) recommendations and advice for industries using products containing PFAS?
 1. If so, what NICNAS recommendations and advice is being followed and implemented?
 2. If not, why not?

Answer —

1. Airservices Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (ARFFS) do not use foams that have not been approved by CASA. Airservices Australia (Airservices) fire fighters are trained in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which protects them from a range of hazards including chemical contamination.

Our current procedures (which include the proper use of PPE) are considered to be effective mitigators

of any risk of exposure by ARFFS staff.

2. Please refer to the answers i – iv provided in Committee question number 96.
3. Yes, Airservices has followed the NICNAS recommendations by phasing out fire fighting foams containing PFAS at all civilian airports since 2003 and has been using a PFAS-free foam since 2010.