

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 13 & 15 February 2013

Question: E13-021

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: International Bans on Testing Cosmetics on Animals

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Senator Rhiannon

Question:

In answer to my previous questions about Australia following the lead of the EU Parliament in banning the use of animals in cosmetic testing: could the Minister elaborate on the answer 'For many health effects, non-animal test methods have either not yet been developed, or are still in the process of being validated as reliable replacement methods.' My understanding is that there are very few areas in which alternatives to animal tests have not yet been developed and validated. What international research informed the Minister's answer?

Answer:

The National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme maintains a watching brief on international activities related to alternative testing, especially in the application of the test methods, updates on their validation and regulatory status. The European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods, the US Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are the main organisations involved in the validation on non-animal tests, and the reports from these organisations are relied upon to inform Australian Government agencies of the status of alternative tests.

In recent press statements regarding the ban which came into force on 11 March 2013, the European Commission has acknowledged that the replacement of animal testing methods is not yet possible for the evaluation of all health effects, particularly the complex health effects that concern the whole human organism.

A number of validated alternative methods exist that can be used as partial or full replacement of animal experiments, such as in the areas of skin and eye irritation and determining the ability of a chemical to penetrate the skin and enter the bloodstream. For some of the more complex human health end points, the validated alternative testing methods are not replacement methods, but rather supplemental methods for reducing the number of animals used in tests. These include tests for determining the potential for a chemical to

cause cancer, gene mutations, effects on the reproductive system or the developing foetus, or toxic effects after a single exposure. For determining whether a chemical can cause allergies in susceptible people there are currently no validated alternative testing methods, although there are several currently going through the validation process. There are no validated and accepted non-animal alternatives available for determining the potential for a chemical to cause adverse effects on the human body after repeated exposures (which is a particularly important endpoint for evaluating the safety of cosmetics since these chemicals are applied to the human body regularly).