

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016, 10 February 2016**

**Ref No:** SQ16-000301

**OUTCOME:** 7 - Health Infrastructure, Regulation, Safety and Quality

**Topic:** NICNAS National Assessment of CSG Chemicals

**Type of Question:** Hansard Page 122, 10 February 2016

**Senator:** Rhiannon, Lee

**Question:**

Dr Richards: That is correct. We have provided a range of technical inputs into the project and the Department of the Environment is responsible for determining how those come together and when they are published.

Senator RHIANNON: When did you send your report to the Department of the Environment?

Dr Richards: We have provided quite a range of reports in various drafts over that period of time, since the project started. As I mentioned before, I am happy to take on notice when the different drafts of the report were provided and when they were due.

**Answer:**

The National Assessment of Chemicals Associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction (the project) commenced on 1 July 2012 and, under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of the Environment, the first deliverable from the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) to the Department of the Environment was a report of chemicals used in drilling and hydraulic fracturing, based on responses to a survey of companies involved in coal seam gas extraction in Australia. The original due date for this report was 30 December 2012.

This first report took longer to complete than initially anticipated due to the additional time required to collect data from companies and negotiate with some companies on maintaining confidentiality of commercially sensitive information. Given these issues, the Department of the Environment agreed to accept the first draft of this report when it had been completed. Since then, this report has been subject to ongoing revision as new information has become available over the course of the project. Timeframes for subsequent drafts of this report (and all others) have been subject to negotiation on a case-by-case basis.

This project is a large and complex scientific undertaking that has taken longer than was expected when it commenced. It has involved the iterative development, testing and refinement of new models and methodologies and the coordination of inter-related processes, and the various reports have needed to be drafted (and subsequently revised) in sequence. To maintain the accuracy and integrity of the project outcomes, there has been a need to update the findings of previous analyses (and revise relevant reports) as new data and information have become available.

When finalised, the assessment will comprise a set of over 15 individual reports. NICNAS has been the lead agency in preparing a number of these reports, relating to:

- Identification of Chemicals Associated with Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia;
- Literature Review: Human Health Implications and Regulation;
- Literature Review: Summary Report ;
- Chemicals of Low Concern for Human Health;
- Human Health Hazards of Chemicals used in Coal Seam Gas Extraction in Australia;
- and
- Human Health Risks Associated with Surface Handling of Chemicals Used in Coal Seam Gas Extraction.

A number of the drafts of reports that have been provided to the Department of the Environment over the course of the project have been subject to review by project collaborators, as well as independent domestic and international experts. All of the reports that make up the assessment will be released when the assessment is finalised.