

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000625

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

Topic: Coal Seam Gas

Type of Question: Written Questions on Notice

Senator: Waters, Larissa

Question:

The assessment will identify contaminants that naturally occur underground, like arsenic and mercury, radio-isotopes and organic contaminants, that might be mobilised by CSG fracking. Your website states the assessment, depending on the availability of data, will consider the preliminary environmental risks from these contaminants.

- a) In your work to date, have you found that there is a lot of information lacking to do a comprehensive (rather than preliminary) environmental risk analysis of how fracking is likely to mobilise these naturally occurring toxins?
- b) Do you anticipate that a lot of questions regarding the environmental risks will remain unanswered at the conclusion of this assessment? Will your reports clearly identify these outstanding questions which need further research?
- c) Is it correct to say that CSG projects approved to date have been approved without actually knowing the environmental impacts of mobilising these toxins?

Answer:

These matters are being investigated as part of the National Assessment of Chemicals Association with Coal Seam Gas. The findings will be made public once the process is completed.