

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016, 21 October 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000980

OUTCOME: 1 - Population Health

Topic: Environmental Noise

Type of Question: Hansard Page 122, 21 October 2015

Senator: Madigan, John

Question:

- a) Are you able to tell the committee why the 2004 enHealth report: *The health effects of environmental noise - other than hearing loss*, published by the federal health department, was shelved and why this report's once urgent recommendation has never been acted upon by successive Commonwealth governments and state departments of health?
- b) Do you accept that sleep deprivation can harm health?
- c) Does the federal health department have any plans to work in this neglected area of public health in the interests of preventing further serious damage to the health of Australian citizens from excessive noise pollution, regardless of the source of that noise?

Answer:

The Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) publication *The health effects of environmental noise – other than hearing loss* (2004) (the “environmental noise guidelines”) is currently being updated to take account of an expanded evidence base on the effect of environmental noise on health outcomes. This process is being managed by the NSW Department of Health under the auspices of enHealth.

Responsibility for environmental noise is shared across a range of national, state and local government agencies. The environmental noise guidelines contain recommendations for relevant health agencies to inform the development of improved health-based noise guidelines, standards and policies to assist local government and environment, transport and planning agencies to better consider noise within relevant regulatory and policy frameworks. The Department of Health is not in a position to advise on the extent to which relevant agencies, including state and territory departments of health, have acted on these guidelines.