Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 115

Hearing: Additional Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 4

Programme: Science

Topic: National Assessment of CSG Chemicals - timing of release

Hansard Page: N/A

Question Date: 24 February 2016

Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

IESC raised concerns about the delay in delivering the final report in April 2014, October 2014 at Meeting 22 of the IESC. It also seems like there was a “draft final report” completed in October 2014 but it still hasn’t been published – can you explain that?

Answer:

The National assessment of chemicals associated with coal seam gas extraction in Australia is a very large and complex scientific undertaking which has taken longer than was expected when the project commenced. This work has not been done previously in Australia or overseas, with new models and methodologies developed and tested in order to complete the assessment.

The assessment has involved a number of iterative steps and inter-related processes, many of which have needed to be done in sequence. There are two separate streams of analysis - one for human health and one for the environment. The steps included for each are: literature reviews; indentifying chemicals used in drilling and hydraulic fracturing for coal seam gas extraction; developing conceptual models of exposure pathways; models to predict soil, surface and shallow groundwater concentrations of identified chemicals; reviewing information on human health hazards; identifying existing Australian work practices to assess human health and environmental risks; and Australian and international peer reviews of the methods.

When finalised, the assessment will comprise a set of over 15 individual reports. At its October 2014 meeting, the IESC provided initial comments on a draft of one of these reports. All of the reports that make up the assessment will be released when the assessment is finalised.