

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

Question No: 116
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 4
Programme: Science
Topic: National Assessment of CSG Chemical - Timing of release
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 24 February 2016
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

Can you tell us why the delay in releasing the NICNAS National Assessment of CSG Chemicals has occurred? Originally slated for release at the end of 2013.

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. To maintain the accuracy and integrity of the assessment, there has also been a need to update the analysis as new data and information have become available, including guidance material on potential human health and environment exposure.

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; identifying 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.