

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

Question No: 284
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: National Water Commission
Topic: WATERLINES REPORT NO. 59
Hansard Page: 54
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Rhiannon asked:

Senator RHIANNON: In your Waterlines report, No. 59 October 2011, it is suggested: A streamlined, standardised national framework for assessing the cumulative effects of mining on groundwater and connected systems... would be one way of dealing with the impacts of mining on groundwater. How are developments going with regard to that? Are there any other ideas that you have in mind, because you do say 'one way'?

Ms Olsson: Yes. I do not think I could say there would be much progress with regard to one streamlined system with regard to groundwater, but I will take that on notice and give you the full detail.

Answer:

Each state and territory currently undertakes its own assessments mainly based around Environmental Impact Statement processes. A standardised national framework for assessing the cumulative impacts of mining on groundwater and connected systems has not been adopted, however there have been a number of developments since the publication of the Waterlines report No. 59 in 2011:

- A National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development was signed in 2012.
- The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) was amended in June 2013 to provide that water resources are a matter of national environmental significance in relation to coal seam gas and large coal mining development.
- Under its One-Stop Shop framework, the Australian Government has introduced amendments to the EPBC Act to allow the Federal Environment Minister to accredit states and territories to make approval decisions involving the water trigger, consistent with all other matters of national environmental significance.
- The Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Mining Development and the Bioregional Assessment Programme have been established to strengthen the science underpinning decision by governments as they relate to the water related impacts of coal seam gas and large mining development.