

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

Question No: 148
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.6
Programme: Environment Quality Division (EQD)
Topic: Waste and advisory bodies
Hansard Page:
Question Date:
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

1. Are the Product Stewardship Advisory Group, the Oil Stewardship Advisory Council and the Fuel Standards Consultative Committee still functioning?
2. Are you currently working on any reform proposals regarding hazardous waste, oil stewardship, or product stewardship more generally?
3. Can you give an estimate of the FTE devoted to those reforms?

Answer:

1. Status of advisory groups

Under section 24A of the *Fuel Quality Standards Act 2000*, the Minister is required to consult with the Fuel Standards Consultative Committee (FSCC) on technical matters. Until the FSCC is repealed, the Minister will continue to consult with the FSCC on those technical matters.

The Government confirmed its commitment to repeal the Product Stewardship Advisory Group (PSAG), the Oil Stewardship Advisory Council and the FSCC in the 2014-15 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, as part of the Smaller Government reform agenda.

The Minister has written to the Chair of the PSAG and the OSAC and the members of the FSCC advising that meetings will not be convened in anticipation of their repeal, and in the case of the FSCC, advised that any consultation with the FSCC on technical matters will occur via correspondence.

2. Reform proposals regarding hazardous waste

Work is underway on a programme of targeted hazardous waste reforms to help improve the implementation of Australia's international obligations under the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal. Reform opportunities include both legislative and non-legislative changes.

A process is currently underway to gather views from stakeholders about potential reform opportunities. Any decision to progress reforms would occur after further engagement with stakeholders through processes including cost benefit analysis and regulatory impact assessment.

Other reform work has included refreshed research to improve the knowledge base regarding Australia's hazardous waste management capabilities and work with jurisdictions to strengthen and standardise hazardous waste data on movement of material domestically.

Reform proposals regarding Product Stewardship for Oil

The third independent review of the *Product Stewardship (Oil) Act 2000* was completed in September 2013 and tabled in Parliament on 12 December 2013. The inclusion of a measure in the 2014-15 Budget to restore the Product Stewardship for Oil Scheme to budget neutrality by increasing the levy collected under the Scheme from 5.449 to 8.5 cents per litre of oil implemented the most substantive recommendation of the Review. The Government is considering the remaining recommendations of the review, and expects to finalise its response in early 2015-16.

Reform proposals regarding Product Stewardship

An operational review of the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme was initiated on 22 September 2014, in response to stakeholder concerns that the scheme was not meeting public demand and was having an adverse impact on businesses in the e-waste recycling industry. In November 2014, a review paper was released and a national consultation process commenced, which received 85 written submissions.

The Minister announced the findings of the Review on 10 June 2015. Amendments to the *Product Stewardship (Televisions and Computers) Regulations 2011*, which implemented the findings of the review, commenced on 1 July 2015. The amendments brought forward the industry recycling target in coming years and strengthened e-waste management standards.

3. Reform FTE estimates:

The estimated FTE devoted to the hazardous waste and the product stewardship for oil scheme reforms was provided in response to question no. 137 asked during the May 2014 Additional Estimates.

The estimated FTE working on the reforms to the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme referred to above is 2.5 FTE.