

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

Question No: 78
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.4
Programme: EACD
Topic: Coal seam gas condition - Commonwealth imposed
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Dr de Brouwer: The third part is where we would like to do more, especially in the future. The general approach to this in Australia—and globally—is to take a principles-based adaptive management approach to economic development that maintains and protects environment. It is principles-based. For us that is the ecologically sustainable development principles and the precautionary principle, from our legislation. But it is adaptive management. What does 'adaptive management' mean? It means that based on an assessment of risk there is a sequential conditioning in approvals as required. That draws on knowledge or on further work that is required to satisfy various conditions in the development. So it is a progressive conditioning that is monitored and adapted and changed as new information comes to light. But it is again through a risk-based framework: you don't take unacceptable risks, but you take risks that you judge to be acceptable along various stages. You condition along that frame.

Senator Waters: On that, with your progressive conditioning has there been a change to any coal seam gas condition that the Commonwealth has imposed?

Dr de Brouwer: That one I will have to come back to, or take on notice. I am just trying to explain what is on the website.

Senator Waters: I understand.

Answer:

The water monitoring and management conditions attached to all major coal seam gas projects under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* have applied an adaptive management approach.

The conditions set the standards for the adaptive management process and are progressive in nature with defined information required at different stages of a development. The conditions are not changed as a part of adaptive management process.

The subordinate adaptive management plans, required under the conditions, are changed periodically. These plans outline the detailed adaptive monitoring and management approach for each project and are required to be amended and resubmitted for approval periodically as new information becomes available.