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

Question No: 125

Hearing: Budget Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 1

Program: Environment Standards Division (ESD)

Topic: Continuous monitoring

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Question Date: 23 May 2017

Question Type: Spoken

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: Sure, but you want that to be accurate. Do you have a sense that continuous monitoring would improve the accuracy of that annual data?
Mr McNee: I would have to take that on notice because, in fact, it is not necessarily a straightforward question. If you look at, for example, some of the manuals that set down the framework for the collection of information, there are quite complex formulas that sit around how you work out the volumes of fuels that are being used and those types of things. I would probably need to look through that with experts under the NPI to make a judgement on that.

Answer:

The National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) reports emissions data that is calculated using validated emissions estimation techniques that use a range of inputs, including direct measurement of emissions. This approach is consistent with other reputable emissions inventories, including the US Toxics Release Inventory. Direct measurement of emissions can include sampling and analysis using a continuous emissions monitoring system, or periodic sampling and analysis.

Continuous emissions monitoring is not practicable for all pollutants, including size defined particulate matter and metals. For these pollutants, continuous emissions monitoring will not improve the accuracy of annual emissions estimates. Where continuous emissions monitoring is not appropriate, periodic emissions sampling and analysis are used to obtain a representative sample of the emissions. This provides a ‘snapshot’ of the pollutants in the emissions.