

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

Question No: 43
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 5
Programme: Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Topic: Approvals under the EPBC Act climate considerations
Hansard Page: 48
Question Date: 24 February 2014
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: When those coalmines are approved, can you advise whether the emissions from the burning of that coal are considered in that approval process and whether or not the climate change impacts under the EPBC Act are considered?

Dr de Brouwer: Under the EPBC Act, there are specific requirements on the minister and us in relation to matters of national environmental significance. I do not think that is one of them, Senator.

Senator WATERS: I think you are right. So there is no climate consideration in the EPBC Act?

Dr de Brouwer: Under the EPBC Act.

Senator WATERS: Is there any consideration in domestic decision making of the climate effect of burning the coal from those mines?

Dr de Brouwer: I will have to take that on notice.

Senator WATERS: If you could. Again, I suspect the answer is no. What I am trying to establish is how a government factors in the climate effects of these mega mines when making its decisions. I am keen to be reassured that there is some process or some person somewhere that does think about that. My understanding is that the national environmental laws do not require that and nor do our national inventory targets, given that it is a scope 3 emission. But I am really eager to be disavowed of that.

Answer:

Emissions are not a trigger for requiring assessment and approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act).

The Government is committed to an unconditional target to reduce emissions by 5 per cent below 2000 levels by 2020.