

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Senate Estimates

1 June 2010

**Question:** BR5  
**Topic:** Open pit mines and seismic activity  
**Proof Hansard Page:** E34-E35

**Senator Ludlam asked:**

Senator LUDLAM-You might want to take this on notice. I have been sent a paper by a geophysicist who is investigating a link between very large open pit mines and seismic activity-the super pit being one example and the Newcastle earthquake another and so on. Has Geoscience done any recent research into that area and can you provide us with a backgrounder or table any research on induced earthquakes around large open pits?

Dr Pigram-No.

Senator LUDLAM-No to everything?

Dr Pigram-We have not done any research in the research between open pit mining and earthquake activity.

Senator LUDLAM-Do you think that is maybe a worthwhile line of inquiry? Concerns have been raised around the Olympic Dam open pit as well. A fault runs right through where the mine void will be. I wonder whether that is something that you are interested in.

Dr Pigram-It is not part of our work program, but I am happy to take it on notice.

**Answer:**

The scientific literature contains a number of articles on induced seismicity near mine sites. While Geoscience Australia's seismologists are aware of the literature we do not do any research into this phenomenon. Research into induced seismicity is undertaken in the context of in-mine safety, and in-mine safety is a role for state government regulators. In the case of the recent earthquake near the Super Pit in Kalgoorlie, we provided information on the earthquake location and magnitude to the Department of Mines and Petroleum in Western Australia. Geoscience Australia has not formed a view on whether the earthquake near Kalgoorlie was induced by mining activity.