

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates 13-16 Feb 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.1 Domestic Policy

Topic: Chemicals and Plastics

Senator: Senator Payne

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Question:

The CRC in its recent report on progress under the National Seamless Economy reforms warned that very little progress has been made by the Commonwealth on its responsibility, through the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS), for the reformed legislative package for industrial chemicals. In light of the CRC expressing particular concern about these reforms, which form almost one third of the Productivity Commission recommendations, has the Commonwealth provided COAG with the updated implementation plans for industrial chemicals reforms?

What has been the cause of this extensive delay? When will this commitment be fulfilled?

The CRC also expressed concern that that Attorney General's Department has not submitted an implementation plan to COAG concerning security sensitive ammonium nitrate. What are the reasons for the delay in the Commonwealth fulfilling this commitment that relates to national security issues? When will the new Attorney General provide this plan?

Answer:

Q: Has the Commonwealth provided COAG with the updated implementation plans for industrial chemicals reforms?

A: Yes. Advice from the Business Regulation and Competition Working Group (BRCWG) on the progress of chemicals and plastics reform, including advice on implementation milestones, has been provided to COAG for consideration.

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Q: What has been the cause of this extensive delay?

A: The issues are complex. A number of portfolios are cooperating to ensure complementary legislative change and appropriate new funding arrangements are developed.

Q: When will this commitment be fulfilled?

A: COAG has agreed that commitments made under the Seamless National Economy National Partnership will be completed by the end of 2012. COAG is expected to consider the COAG Reform Council report and its response at its next meeting.

Q: The CRC also expressed concern that the Attorney General's department has not submitted an implementation plan to COAG concerning security sensitive ammonium nitrate. What are the reasons for the delay in the Commonwealth fulfilling this commitment that relates to national security issues?

A: Security sensitive ammonium nitrate (SSAN) is regulated by state and territory governments. Should COAG accept the COAG Reform Council's recommendations concerning SSAN, the Attorney-General's Department will promptly consider a way forward for the reforms relating to achieving national uniformity in conducting security checks and achieving greater harmonisation of the SSAN regulations.

Q: When will the new Attorney General provide this plan?

A: Should COAG accept the COAG Reform Council's recommendations concerning security sensitive ammonium nitrate, the Attorney-General's Department will submit an implementation plan to COAG.