



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

JACS No. 96

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

JEREMY HANSON CSC MLA (CHAIR), MARISA PATERSON MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), JO CLAY MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Ms Jo Clay MLA: To ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

In relation to: **Fire retardants**

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We've had problems in the past with fire retardants like PFAS, PFOS and PFOA. What are the current fire retardants used in fighting bushfires, like compressed air fire-fighting foam systems, and are these safe for people and the environment?

Mick Gentleman MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) through two of its Services – ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R) and ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) – use five types of firefighting foams and fire suppressants.

The phasing out of Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) by ACTF&R commenced in September 2004. It was completely withdrawn from service in April 2005.

The fire retardants currently used in Australia are of low toxicity. Risk assessments carried out in the United States and in Victoria demonstrated that the risk of health effects was very low.

Any decision to use foam or suppressant is based on a risk approach, while balancing the benefits and consequences of its use. It should be noted that no firefighting foam is totally environmentally friendly. All foams have potential adverse effects, with any potential risks being specific to the circumstances of the emergency incident, and its location.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:

Date: 23/3/2021

By the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mick Gentleman MLA