



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality

QUESTION

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Wednesday, 14 May 2008

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

QUESTION

Date Wednesday, 14 May 2008
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Questioner Allison, Sen Lyn
Speaker

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder Conroy, Sen Stephen
Question No. 313

Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality

Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 27 February 2008:

Senator Allison (Victoria) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, With reference to the submissions by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee inquiry into air safety and cabin air quality in the BAe 146 aircraft in 2000, revealing that fumes containing oil toxins such as tricresyl phosphate (TCP) have in the past leaked into the cabins of commercial aircraft, causing passenger and crew illness and the committee's recommendations that a national standard be set for checking and monitoring engine seals on all passenger commercial jet aircraft and also to the Government's response that, for economic reasons, it would wait for this to be undertaken at an international level:

- (1) Can information be provided on whether such an international standard has been created; if not, will the Minister take steps to implement such a standard in Australia?
- (2) Will the Minister consider funding a study to determine whether TCP is leaking into aircraft cabins?
- (3) What investigation, if any, has been conducted into pilot, crew and passenger illnesses considered likely to be caused by TCP leaking into aircraft cabins?
- (4) Is the Minister aware that the United States of America Academy of Scientists has recommended that aircraft interiors be regularly tested for neurotoxins such as TCP?
- (5) Is the Minister aware that the Australian and International Pilots Association is co-funding research with the Royal Australia Air Force at the University of Washington to develop a blood test for neurotoxins such as TCP; and (b) will this test be used in Australia; if so, when?

Senator Conroy (Victoria—Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy)—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question:

- (1) There are international maintenance standards for checking and monitoring engine seals on all passenger commercial jet aircraft. These standards are set by the certifying authorities for the aircraft, principally the US and European safety regulators. They are followed in Australia.

There are currently no standards for air quality onboard commercial aircraft although a standard is scheduled to be released in the

United States in 2008. The European Union is also developing its own standard.

CASA is monitoring developments and will consider these standards when they are finalised.

- (2) The Minister has not considered any proposals to fund a study to determine whether TCP is leaking into aircraft cabins.
- (3) CASA advises that there are a number of relevant overseas studies including:
 - An American Society for Heating, Refrigeration and Air conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) research project 1262 "Relate Air Quality and Other Factors to Comfort and Health Related Symptoms Reported by Passengers and Crew on Commercial Transport Aircraft", which is studying a wide variety of elements of the cabin environment in relation to health.
 - ASHRAE research project 1306 "Incident response monitoring technologies for aircraft cabin air quality", in progress through 2007, is looking at the current technologies that would be appropriate for sampling episodic events of cabin air contamination.
 - ACER (Aircraft Cabin Environmental Research) and OHRCA (Occupational Health Research Consortium in Aviation) are exploring capturing episodic conditions using a cohort of flight attendants equipped

with grab sampling technology to capture episodic events.

- ACER also has a work statement to evaluate sensors for episodic and non-episodic events.
- A United Kingdom Building Research Establishment/Aviation Health Working Group Study published in 2004, which studied cabin air quality on BAE 146 and Boeing 737-300 aircraft in response to recommendations made in the House of Lords report on Air Travel and Health with regard to in-flight measurements of air quality parameters.
- A number of small studies have been conducted measuring volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds

(4) I am advised that CASA is aware of this recommendation.

(5) (a) I am advised that CASA is aware of this research.

(b) No decision has been made as to whether this test will be used in Australia. The research is still at the laboratory level and researchers are unable to give an estimate of when it might be available for clinical use.