



Australian Government
Indigenous Business Australia

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2013-14 Budget Estimates
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Tabled by: Chris Fry
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Senator Claire Moore
Senator for Queensland
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator

As a matter of respect to the role and importance of the Senate Community Affairs Committee I wish to address a matter that was reported on page 9 in the Australian newspaper on 13th April 2013 in an article titled 'Indigenous business group under attack'. The article referred to my role as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Indigenous Business Australia and the Senate Estimates process.

As the Committee is aware, last year three anonymous letters purportedly from IBA staff were addressed to the Hon Jenny Macklin MP Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The letters raised allegations against the IBA Chair and IBA Executive. The allegations detailed in the anonymous letter of 10 March 2012 were investigated by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (Deloitte) who found they were unsubstantiated. A hotline established at the time of the investigation to allow IBA staff to contact Deloitte directly with information about the allegations attracted no callers.

A fourth anonymous letter dated 7 April 2013 was addressed to the Hon Tony Abbott MP Leader of the Opposition. The letter includes an allegation that I "mysteriously disappeared on leave" at the time of the Senate Estimates Committee hearing on 15 February 2013 and infers that this was an "act of dishonesty and deception". The article in The Australian said "IBA chief executive Chris Fry's absence was raised in an anonymous letter from "concerned staff" at the statutory organisation claiming that he "mysteriously disappeared" at the time of the hearings."

This allegation is untrue and there was no act of dishonesty or deception involved. To ensure that any misconceptions are corrected I seek to put the record correctly.

I took annual leave. I requested it and the IBA Board approved it. Of its self, this should be sufficient to deal with any questions of impropriety. The circumstances were that my daughter was in Cambodia undertaking study and had planned a trip to Vietnam before returning to Australia. Unfortunately her travelling companion pulled out at short notice and she invited me to join her. As a father I was delighted to be invited. Following the passing of my sister late last year, who left behind three young daughters of her own, I also had a strong personal need to spend some time with my daughter who will be completing her university studies in two months and in all likelihood moving out of home. In other circumstances I would not have taken leave at this time.



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As I mentioned, the IBA Board approved my leave and accepted my assurance that IBA would be well represented at the Senate Estimates hearing by Mr Leo Bator who has over 30 years experience as a Public Servant including eight years as the CEO of ComSuper. I believe that the hearing was not diminished by Mr Bator representing IBA.

Please be assured that I take my responsibilities to represent IBA before the Committee very seriously, and I recognise the important role that the Committee plays in public accountability. This is evidenced by my attending a Committee hearing last year on the day that my wife was undergoing minor heart surgery, and I find the inference offensive.

I trust the Committee accepts and understands my explanation.

Yours sincerely



Chris Fry
Chief Executive Officer