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Australian Government
**Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water**

**David Fredericks PSM
Secretary**

EC24-000478

Chair, Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
C/O Committee Secretariat
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Chair

I refer to correspondence from Senator Hughes dated 16 February 2024, on behalf of Opposition Senators, in relation to the Additional Senate Estimates hearing of the Environment and Communications Committee held on 12 February 2024.

The letter requested clarification about the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the Business Grants Hub (BGH) in the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) in relation to the management of a grant agreement and payment to the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO).

Senator Hughes stated that in a number of respects I and other senior DCCEEW officials advised that matters raised were not for my department or were matters for DISR, and that some of this evidence was subsequently contradicted by DISR.

To the contrary, I submit that the evidence presented by myself and other senior DCCEEW officials was accurate, and indeed that our evidence and the evidence provided by DISR in relation to the EDO and the operations of the BGH were entirely consistent.

To explain, both agencies' respective roles in this matter, and our explanations of those roles, are in line with the Streamlining Government Grants Administration (SGGA) program announced in the 2015-16 Budget, and used to deliver simpler, more consistent and efficient grants administration across government. This policy approach has been used to administer grants by successive governments.

Both DISR (BGH) and DCCEEW have a role in the grant payment to the EDO.

DCCEEW are the policy owners for the Environmental Defenders Office and Environmental Justice Australia grant program (the Program), and BGH are the administrators of the grant agreement and funding. As the policy owners of the Program, DCCEEW is responsible for developing the grant opportunity guidelines (the Guidelines) that specify eligible activities. The Guidelines launched on GrantConnect on 28 March 2023 were prepared in consultation with the Attorney-General's

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John Gorton Building, King Edward Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600 Australia
GPO Box 3090 Canberra ACT 2601 ABN: 63 573 932 849

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Department and BGH. DCCEEW is also responsible for undertaking an evaluation at the conclusion of the Program to assess the appropriateness of the Guidelines and the effectiveness of the policy.

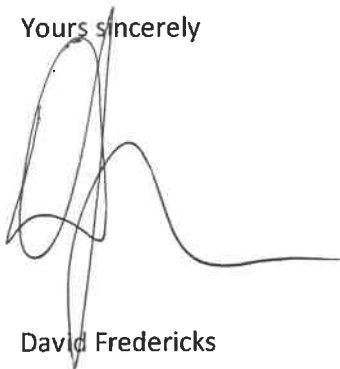
DCCEEW transfers funding and provides the relevant administrative and financial delegations to BGH to manage the administrative requirements of the grant. BGH's responsibilities include publishing the agreed Guidelines, application assessment and selection, establishing, negotiating and signing the grant agreement with the grant recipient, assessing milestone reports from the EDO, and making associated milestone payments.

Against this background, I reiterate that the evidence provided by officials from DCCEEW and DISR accurately explained the respective roles and responsibilities of each agency in relation to the provision and management of the EDO grant, and in doing so were consistent.

In accordance with usual process, I would respectfully request that this correspondence be provided to the members of the Environment and Communications Committee and tabled.

As a courtesy I have also cc'ed Senator Hughes to this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Fredericks', with a long horizontal tail extending to the right.

David Fredericks

27 February 2024

cc Senator Hollie Hughes