



**SENATOR NITA GREEN**  
LABOR SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND

18 October 2020

The Hon Senator Simon Birmingham  
Minister Representing the Minister for the Environment in the Senate

**By email: [minister.trade@dfat.gov.au](mailto:minister.trade@dfat.gov.au)**

Dear Minister,

The Environment and Communications Legislation Committee was advised on Thursday, 15 October 2020 that the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) Chair Emeritus Professor Helene Marsh would not be able to attend estimates hearings and would not be able to appear remotely or by teleconference due to being in a remote location.

As you would be aware the schedule for Budget Estimates has been known for some time. This year arrangements have been made for officials to appear remotely to facilitate individual requests from officials who are unable to travel or appear in person.

While Budget Estimates may be operating under different procedures the expectations and obligations remain the same.

Opposition Senators expect that every Department official, agency or statutory office holder required by the Committee will make themselves available for Estimates hearings; including making appropriate scheduling arrangements to ensure they are available when requested.

It is entirely unacceptable for an official required by the Committee to not be available, unless there are extenuating circumstances, and then it is reasonable for the Committee to expect that a deputy will be available. It is extraordinary that the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) has refused to provide any suitable witness.

I seek your assurances that, to the extent possible, answers to questions asked by Senators regarding the TSSC will be provided by the TSSC secretariat and, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) Chair will be available for a spillover hearing, if required, at the convenience of Committee Senators.

Yours sincerely,

**Senator Nita Green**

**SENATOR NITA GREEN | LABOR SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND**

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