



SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Dr Steven Kennedy
Secretary
Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities

Email: steven.kennedy@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Dr Kennedy

I write to you on behalf of the Senate Select Committee on Electric Vehicles. As you may be aware, the Committee is due to table its final report today. During its inquiry, the Committee has spent considerable time pursuing information from the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities in relation to the work of the Ministerial Forum on Vehicle Emissions.

The Committee is disappointed that officers from the department did not promptly correct the assertion made at the hearing on 17 August 2018 that no minutes were taken for some meetings of the Ministerial Forum.

The Committee is of the view that information related to the Ministerial Forum should have been made available at the earliest opportunity to the Committee. Instead, the Committee waited over three months to receive copies of all records of these meetings that the department has made and retained. The Committee is concerned that had Senator Patrick not made a Freedom of Information request and subsequent internal review request with respect to Ministerial Forum minutes, the minutes or records of these meetings may not have been found and provided to the Committee.

Given the Committee's concerns, I remind you of the Resolution expressing the opinion of the Senate (No. 53) in relation to training for heads of departments and Senior Executive Service officers on the accountability of their departments to the Houses of Parliament and their committees:

The Senate is of the opinion that all heads of departments and other agencies, statutory office holders and Senior Executive Service officers should be required, as part of their duties, to undertake study of the principles governing the operation of Parliament, and the accountability of their departments, agencies and authorities to the Houses of Parliament and their committees, with particular reference to the rights and responsibilities of, and protection afforded to, witnesses before parliamentary committees.

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I also draw your attention to the *Government Guidelines for Official Witnesses before Parliamentary Committees and Related Matters*, particularly paragraph 5.6.2:

Once the need to provide a committee with revised information has been established, it is most important that the committee receive that revised information at the earliest opportunity.

The Committee seeks your assurance that all Senior Executive Service officers undergo the necessary training pursuant to the above Senate Resolution.

The Committee has agreed that this letter will be published on its website and it is open to any Senator to further pursue this matter through questions in the Senate Chamber or at Senate Estimates hearings.

Yours sincerely

Senator Tim Storer
Chair

30 January 2019