



THE HON GREG COMBET AM MP

Minister for Defence Materiel and Science
Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Senator Mary Jo Fisher
Chair
Environment, Communications and the Arts References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

23 JUN 2010

Dear Senator Fisher,

Inquiry into Energy Efficient Homes Package

I refer to your letter of 9 June to Dr Martin Parkinson, Secretary of the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, in which you requested Dr Parkinson to refer a number of matters for my consideration under Senate procedural orders.

The first matter referred to documents that Dr Parkinson refused to release on the grounds of public interest immunity, relating to 11 responses from the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to questions on notice raised by the Senate Committee.

I have had time to review these questions and the provided responses. On the advice available to me, I believe the Department has provided appropriate responses to these questions and I see no need for any further action with regard to this issue.

Your letter also refers to the issue of briefs provided by the Department of Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts to the former Minister on the topic of the Government's Home Insulation Program. In line with your request, Dr Parkinson has referred 52 briefs to me for further consideration regarding their release.

You would appreciate that these briefs were prepared for consideration by another Minister, prior to my becoming the Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency with responsibility for the rectification of the Home Insulation Program. You would also appreciate that the briefs in question deal with a substantial amount of material.

Since I was not the Minister responsible for the subject matter of the 52 briefs at the time of their original submission, I am not familiar with their contents.

I am very happy to give these documents the consideration they require and have already commenced this task. This will involve consultation with my colleagues, specifically the former Minister, as well as a detailed review of the documents myself to decide what, if any, public interest immunity might be appropriately claimed.

My intention is to conduct this task in a responsible, comprehensive and timely manner.

Given the time frame since your correspondence, and the size of this proposed task, I should advise you that my consideration of these matters may not meet your requirements for a decision prior to the proposed reporting date of the Senate Committee.

You may therefore wish to take this into account as part of the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Greg Combet AM MP