

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 164
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Program: Policy Analysis and Implementation (PAAI)
Topic: Senate Order – Meetings with former Ministers
Hansard Page: 8 and 9
Question Date: 27 February 2017
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Rhiannon asked:

Senator RHIANNON: As far as we can tell there was only one document tabled in response to this order and that was by Senator Birmingham as the Minister for Education and Training. Did anyone in the Environment portfolio meet with any former ministers who are within their cooling-off period since November last year?

Dr de Brouwer: I will have to take that one on notice.

Senator RHIANNON: Considering this is an important issue and the Prime Minister has been on the record a number of times speaking about transparency, and it was only November last year and you have come to estimates, do you really need to take it on notice? Wouldn't there be someone here who could assist, even if you cannot remember?

Dr de Brouwer: I want to give you an accurate answer, so I will take it on notice.

Senator RHIANNON: There is one example that has been reported, interestingly, in the Townsville Bulletin, of former resources minister Ian Macfarlane, who is still within the cooling-off period and, as we know, has got that important CEO position. He boasted at a business function in Townsville in February that he would talk to his 'good mates in Canberra in order to make sure our native title laws are amended in the wake of a Federal Court decision which threatens the Adani mine'. Did the minister or anyone in your department have any contact with Mr Macfarlane about this issue?

Dr de Brouwer: I cannot speak for the minister. The department does not have control of the minister's diary. That is a matter for the minister. On the department, I will take that one on notice.

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you for taking it on notice. If it has not been disclosed, can you then explain why it was not disclosed? If it has been disclosed, that will be informative.

Dr de Brouwer: I will come back on notice, but the issue of continuous disclosure—what that means, how that is applied in practice—is something that we need to work out. There is always a clearance process though for these matters. I will have to come back on notice.

Answer:

No meetings were held between former Ministers and the Secretary or Deputy Secretaries (or equivalent), within the Environment and Energy Portfolio.