

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2007-08
28 May 2007

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES

TOPIC: APEC meetings

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard 28/5/07, Pages E112 and E113)

QUESTION No. B1-120

Senator CHRIS EVANS—..... Have there been bilateral meetings regarding uranium or nuclear matters arranged as part of the APEC meetings in Darwin, in addition to the APEC agendas?

Mr Hartwell—I can only answer that question on the basis that obviously there will be a number of bilateral meetings between energy ministers at the APEC meeting in Darwin. Some of those countries we are presently uranium suppliers to, but whether that issue is part of the agenda, I could not comment at this point in time.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Are we having a bilateral with South Korea?

Mr Hartwell—I do not have the bilateral list before me, so I could not really comment on that.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—But these bilateral meetings would be involving your minister; is that right?

Mr Hartwell—That is correct.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Is there someone here who can help us with the bilaterals that he is holding as part of that conference?

Mr Paterson—The minister's schedule is not something that we would comment on as a matter of course. Certainly, as Mr Hartwell has indicated, a number of bilaterals are expected to take place between the minister and visiting ministers, but we cannot comment either on who will be participating in those bilaterals or on whether or not they will take place.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—We do not publicly confirm whether we have bilaterals?

Mr Paterson—We do not publicly comment on the minister's schedules.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I am not asking about schedules; I am asking whether, as part of the conference, we are having bilateral meetings with other countries.

Mr Paterson—Bilateral meetings are not a part of the formal conference. There is an expectation that there will be some bilaterals between the minister and visiting ministers and there were some scheduled and others being worked on, but I cannot comment on the minister's schedule in relation to bilaterals.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Aren't bilaterals a bit more formal than just sitting down and having a cup of tea with them? I thought they were—

Mr Paterson—They take a variety of forms.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—All right, but the normal understanding of bilaterals involves some sort of prearranged meeting between government representatives to work on issues that are agreed, on agreed agendas?

Mr Paterson—They take a variety of forms. As I have indicated, I am not in a position to comment on matters associated with the minister's schedule in relation to this meeting.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—So you are telling me that the question of whether or not our minister is having a bilateral with another country as part of that conference is confidential information?

Mr Paterson—No, I am saying that I am not in a position to comment on it.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I am not asking you to comment; I am asking you whether any bilaterals are occurring and, if so, with whom?

Mr Paterson—There are bilaterals occurring. I have already indicated that.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—So you will not tell us with whom?

Mr Paterson—I cannot tell you with whom because I do not know.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I am sure that someone inside your department who is here can tell us that.

Mr Paterson—I expect that the people who might be able to answer that question are probably in Darwin.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Let us be clear what we are saying about this matter. Are you telling me that you will not tell me or you cannot tell me?

Mr Paterson—I am telling you I cannot tell you.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—And there is no officer here who can tell me?

Mr Paterson—Not that I am aware of.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Perhaps you will take that question on notice for me, then. Can I just ask a couple of questions about the emissions trading task force? Are they still on schedule to report on 31 May?

ANSWER

In conjunction with the meeting of the APEC Energy Ministers in Darwin in May 2007, Minister Macfarlane conducted bilateral meetings with representatives from China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and the United States of America.

These bilateral discussions covered numerous energy-related topics but none of the bilateral meetings were held specifically to discuss uranium and nuclear matters. That said, uranium and nuclear issues were raised during the discussions with Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and the United States.