

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2010-11
31 May 2010

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST

TOPIC: School visits by Chief Scientist

REFERENCE: Written Question–Senator Eggleston

QUESTION No.: BI-136

How many visits annually does the Chief Scientist make to schools (and school functions) as part of her duties? What does this work typically include, and is a part of her role advocating science careers to school students? If a part of her role is advocating science careers to school students, how is this done – and to what level of students most commonly?

ANSWER

One of many of the Chief Scientist's roles is to act as an advocate for science, including promoting science education skills development and broadening awareness of the types and variety of careers available through science.

As part of her role as an advocate for science the Chief Scientist takes every reasonable opportunity to engage with students of all levels, including school visits and participating in other events with students. Initially, opportunities for school visits were sought whenever her itinerary for interstate travel permitted, and those trips involved the preparation of briefs and material to be distributed to students or teachers as well as discussions with both students and teachers.

A more strategic approach has now been developed in order to have a broader and more versatile reach in engaging students. The Chief Scientist now communicates as through interactive social media such as Face book and the Chief Scientist website. These have proven to be efficient and attractive ways to communicate with a larger and broader audience than that which would be reached through direct visits alone. Different aspects of this communication targets students from primary school through post graduate education.

An initiative started last year, continues to be developed, is the Chief Scientist's *Young Science Ambassadors*. This program involves interaction between the Chief Scientist and students representing schools across Australia through online discussions, competitions and face to face activities. *Young Science Ambassadors* will help promote the benefits of studying science disciplines in a way that cuts across age and social constraints. They will also help create interest in science throughout their own local communities.

The Chief Scientist also acts as a visible advocate for science by participating in National Science Week. She will be involved in launching the week in 2010 (as she did in 2009) as well as participating in various National Science Week events, including those involving students.