

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
28 and 29 May 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION (CSIRO)

TOPIC: Climate Change Policy

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Bushby

QUESTION No.: BI-148

1. In March 2012, CSIRO employee Michael Battaglia was reported as having directly criticised the Coalition's climate change policy to a journalist from *The Australian*. This also led to a public disagreement on the policy between the Climate Change Minister and the Shadow Climate Change Minister. Whose approval within CSIRO did Mr Battaglia seek before making his comments to the media, and on what date(s)?
2. Are Mr Battaglia's views about the Coalition's policy endorsed by CSIRO, or are they simply personal? If they do not reflect CSIRO's position, has the organisation sought to correct the public record to that effect at any time – and, if so, how and when?
3. In keeping with the terms of the Public Research Agency Charter, what (if any) sanction or disciplinary action has been taken against Mr Battaglia for his commentary, and on what date(s) was this action taken?

ANSWER

1. No specific approval was sought prior to making these comments to the media as Dr Battaglia is a nominated spokesperson in the area of the potential contribution of the land sector to Australia's greenhouse gas abatement targets and is authorised to speak publicly about these issues.
2. Dr Battaglia was reported in an interview by Sid Maher of the Australian (The Australian 13 March 2012) as saying the Coalition's 85 million tonne abatement target "*seems to be ambitious*" by 2020 and further says "*it will be hard to specify the actual amount that will be taken up*" and "*what happens in the end will depend on the decisions that farmers make*". The statement "*seems to be ambitious*" was a response to the question from the Journalist "*Is it likely that the land-based sector can contribute 85Mt of annual abatement by 2020?*". In the same interview, Dr Battaglia is reported as saying that Agriculture and Forestry could offset 20% or more of Australia's emissions during the next 20 years. These statements indicate the magnitude and complexities of achieving land-based greenhouse gas abatement while confirming the potential of the land sector to contribute to greenhouse gas abatement. These statements taken together are consistent with CSIRO material published in a range of sources. Given the complexity of the issues and the potential for confusion to arise in media reporting, CSIRO published a comprehensive summary of its work on land based greenhouse gas abatement on *The Conversation* web site on 21 March 2012.

3. As Dr Battaglia did not either defend nor criticise policy and his comments were consistent with the expectations of CSIRO officers under the Public Research Agency Charter no sanction or disciplinary action was taken.