

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012
19 October 2011

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Colbeck

QUESTION No.: SI-71

Why do the approval processes that were followed in this case differ so markedly from those that were followed when Dr Spash wanted to make public comments that put him at odds with Government policy?

ANSWER

Dr Spash sought to publish a paper that did not meet CSIRO's scientific standards without the approval of CSIRO, which is required under CSIRO's publication policy. The issues related to Dr Spash were not about the content of his paper, nor were they related to any public comments regarding his paper. The issues that CSIRO sought to resolve with Dr Spash focused on ensuring that his paper met the standards required of a scientific paper from CSIRO as well as the requirements set out under the Public Research Agency Charter, which they did not.

CSIRO's internal review concluded that the original paper did not report new research or present empirical evidence to support all of the authors' conclusions. The paper was also viewed as offering opinion on matters of government policy by applying a critique of neoclassical economic theory to the ETS. Therefore it was not approved for publication. Were those issues to have been rectified as CSIRO strived to do with Dr Spash, CSIRO would have supported the publication of that paper and any public comments that related to the papers findings.