

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: CSIRO

Output Group: CSIRO

DEST Question No. E973_06

Senator Webber provided in writing.

Question:

In relation to the Four Corners program on Monday night I am interested at CSIRO's distinction between scientific prediction and government policy. CSIRO's Executive Team member, Dr Morton suggested that scientists talking about greenhouse gas mitigation targets was not scientific discussion but government policy prescription.

It seems to suggest that this apparently infringed on your understanding on the role of the CSIRO under the Act and its associated responsibilities. Could you explain what that means?

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

Distinction between scientific prediction and government policy

CSIRO encourages its scientists to publish and discuss their research findings. In doing this, they can and do provide information on the results of environmental or other modelling. For example, they provide information about the predicted effects of climate change and they model the predicted outcomes of various emission levels.

While CSIRO scientists can and should present and discuss their scientific results, they should not go beyond the science to "publicly comment on adopted, or proposed, government or opposition policy". (Extract from CSIRO *Policy on Public Comment* 2004/06)