

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
Legislation Committee**

**Additional Estimates 2010-2011, February 2011**

**Answers to questions on notice**

**Climate Change and Energy Efficiency portfolio**

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	55
<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 33		

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—How much funding is essentially committed by virtue of the budgeted sitting fees, the expected costs of travel and those types of things as against discretionary, shall we say, expenditure for the commission?

**Ms Sidhu**—I would really have to take that on notice. The reason for that is that the commission has only had one meeting, and it has only begun its set of deliberations. It hopes to wind those up fairly soon, out of session, about what kinds of activities it might undertake. It will be much easier to form a clearer sense of a budget once that is settled. We would only be able to provide you with a rough estimate at this point.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—Surely in terms of the figures that have been published in the additional estimates papers, the department obviously has made some estimates of what the cost of payment to the commissioners will be. Is there a payment to the scientific advisory panel as well?

**Ms Sidhu**—Yes, but it is a very small payment. Each member of the scientific advisory panel is paid sort of a one-off retainer, and then a daily fee for when they are asked to provide advice by the commission.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—Could you provide that on notice?

**Ms Sidhu**—Certainly.

**Answer:**

The Climate Commission's total budget for the 2010-11 financial year is \$781,000. The indicative amount of this budget allocated for the science advisory panel is \$65,000. This includes a \$5,000 retainer per expert paid to their university or research institution, and a daily sitting fee of \$393.

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<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 34		

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—To go back to the point, the department would obviously have done some budgeting of how much the commissioners will be paid, how much the scientific panel will be paid, what the travel expenses will be, and then presumably made a reasonable estimate of other discretionary operational expenses for the commission?

**Ms Sidhu**—Yes.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—Do we have any of those figures to hand as to what that breakdown is and what those discretionary figures are?

**Ms Sidhu**—We did have an additional estimate. Clearly some of that will have to be adjusted. I do not have those to hand, but am very happy to provide that on notice if you would like.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—If you provide as much of that breakdown as possible, that would be appreciated.

**Answer:**

An indicative Climate Commission budget for the 2010-11 financial year is:

Commissioners' remuneration	\$175,000
Science advisory panel remuneration	\$65,000
Operational expenses	\$541,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$781,000</b>

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<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 34		

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—When was the decision made as to what the structure would be—how many commissioners and how it would be structured?

**Ms Sidhu**—I would have to take that on notice. There was a bit of a process, obviously, in advising the minister and the lead-up to the appointment and to the announcement of the commission, but I would really have to take on notice when that decision was actually made.

**Answer:**

The structure and composition of the Climate Commission was discussed between October 2010 and February 2011. The dates for key decisions were:

- 10 November 2010 – The Multi-Party Climate Change Committee meeting discussed the Climate Commission’s draft Terms of Reference and required skill sets for Commissioners.
- 26 January 2011 – The Chief Commissioner and the Commission’s Terms of Reference were agreed between the Prime Minister and the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.
- 9 February 2011 – The composition of the Commission was agreed between the Prime Minister and the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

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<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	58
<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 34		

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—How many potential commissioners were identified?

**Ms Sidhu**—I cannot recall off hand. I think there were quite a number.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—If you could provide that on notice, that would be appreciated.

**Ms Sidhu**—Certainly.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—Thank you. Again, did anyone decline to participate as a commissioner?

**Ms Sidhu**—Not that I recall.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—If you could just confirm that as well, that would also be appreciated.

**Answer:**

Over twenty names for potential Commissioners were initially considered, covering the broad range of expertise required for the Commission such as climate change science, climate impacts, science communications, business, public policy and economics.

A number of potential commissioners were approached to ascertain their capacity to fit the Commissioner role alongside their existing work commitments. Three candidates felt they did not have sufficient time available to be able to commit to the role. Only one candidate for the position of Chief Commissioner was approached.

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<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	59
<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Change Science		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 7		

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Mr Comley**—We continually review the state of the science. In fact, not a couple of weeks ago after taking over in this role in an acting capacity I sought a briefing from our science team. I asked them the question, ‘How do we in fact keep across of the developments in the science?’ The summary answer is that we do try and keep abreast of the peer-reviewed scientific literature as it relates to climate change, which of course is a process that tries to take hypothesis observations that many people, both scientists and nonscientists make, and subject it to rigorous scrutiny. That team follows the peer-reviewed scientific literature and obviously both take the results and, in some cases, inputs into the IPCC process, which is a rigorous process that has, from recollection, between 2,000 and 3,000 scientists globally engaged in that process, including a further peer review process. I am happy for us to take it on notice to look at that list and provide any analysis or commentary we have. But in general, our approach to assessing to the state of the science is to go back to the peer-reviewed literature, the synthesis of the peer-reviewed literature that comes out of the IPCC and various academies of science, and use that as a basis for forming judgments about feeding into the policy process and informing the public.

**Answer:**

The Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency has not assessed the list of possible cyclones which have impacted on Queensland from 1864 which was tabled by Senator Ian Macdonald. Details of all tropical cyclones that are known to have occurred in Australia since records began in 1906 are contained in a database maintained by the Bureau of Meteorology. After a tropical cyclone has occurred, tropical cyclone meteorologists reanalyse the cyclone and compile a report. This information and data can be found at [www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/index.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/index.shtml).

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<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 31		

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator MACDONALD**—To whom will he be accountable for that? Will he just say, ‘Paris is nice in spring, and there is a conference on, so I will slip over there’? Is that his decision or is it the minister’s decision, or is it the departmental secretary’s decision? Could you just tell me how that will work.

**Mr Leeper**—As I understand the financial management accountability framework, any expenditure of public funds would need to be authorised by a departmental official. Unless I have read the material incorrectly, it is not intended that the Climate Commission manage its own budget; the department will provide that support. I may have that wrong, so we will take it on notice and check it. But the general principle would be that, where public funds are being expended, a delegate needs to be satisfied that the expenditure of funds represents efficient, ethical and effective use of public money and, in all cases involving overseas travel, the relevant delegate would satisfy themselves of that.

**Answer:**

The Terms of Reference of the Climate Commission state that it will be supported by a secretariat maintained by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. This secretariat support includes departmental officials authorising the expenditure of the departmental funds that make up the Commission’s budget, based on the:

- *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997;*
- *Financial Management and Accountability Regulations 1997;*
- *Financial Management Guidelines (including the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines);*
- Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency *Chief Executive Instructions* and financial delegations; and
- other departmental guidance.

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<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	Written		

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

1. Will Tim Flannery, as part of his new part-time role in educating the Australian public about the so-called science of climate change (global warming) be educating them about his belief in telekinesis which he has cited as having a major role in climate?
2. A quote from the first Edition of his book, "The Weather Makers: the History and Future Impact of Climate Change" is "Our global civilisation is telekinetic, which is why it is such a force in the biosphere, but its telekinesis also explains why regional disruptions – such as wars, famines and diseases – can have dire consequences for humanity as a whole."

WordNet Search defines "telekinesis" as:

S: (n) **telekinesis**, psychokinesis (the power to move something by thinking about it without the application of physical force)

Does the Minister believe that an acceptance of this theory is appropriate for a person selected by the Government to lead the Climate Commission?

**Answer:**

The different members of the Climate Commission bring a range of expertise in climate change science, communications, economics and business, given the breadth of the Climate Commission's Terms of Reference. Professor Tim Flannery is a highly skilled and engaging communicator, and a leader with strong scientific credentials. Professor Lesley Hughes and Professor Will Steffen bring a wealth of climate science knowledge to the Commission. All six Commissioners, including the Chief Commissioner, will be able to draw on the expertise of the advisory panel of Australia's leading climate scientists for information and expert advice.

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<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	62
<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Science		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	Written		

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

I refer the Minister to the undermentioned media report:

**“Wong slimes experts who’d wipe the floor with her own**

Andrew Bolt – Tuesday, 22 February 2011 (09:22 am)

Finance Minister Penny Wong believes that any scientist who queries her warming faith is ludicrously stupid. Here she is replying to a question from a Liberal Senator on paying climate alarmist Tim Flannery, a paleontologist, \$180,000 a year to promote the Government’s warmist argument:

*IAN MACDONALD: But you’re providing money to educate the public on their view of climate science and I assume from that in fairness you’ll be providing professor [Bob] Carter and his literally thousands of professional colleagues with similar funding so that they can educate the public on their view on the science.*

*PENNY WONG: Well Senator there are also people who believe the world is flat and the Government doesn’t fund that.*

Here’s just some of the scientists that Wong damns so casually as “flat earthers”:  
Professor Bob Carter, Professor Richard Lindzen, Professor Nir Shaviv, Professor Vincent Courtillot, Professor Freeman Dyson, Professor William Happer, Professor Henrik Svensmark, Professor Willie Wei-Hock Soon, Professor David Henderson, Professor John Christy, Roy W. Spencer, Professor Anthony Kelly and Professor Ross McKittrick.”

Will the Minister apologise to the scientists named below (and many others) who she so rudely, inaccurately and maliciously maligned and defamed under Parliamentary Privilege during Estimates on 21 February 2011?

**Answer:**

No.



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<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 25		

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Minister, as the representative of Mr Combet, do you think, or can you take on notice for Mr Combet, that paying a part-time chairman more than a backbencher, indeed more than a minister of the Crown, gets as a salary is an appropriate use of taxpayers' money?

**Senator Wong**—As I understand Mr Comley's answer, it is not unusual for people in this position to be paid these sorts of amounts. My recollection in previous matters in which I have had some involvement is that referencing of a particular salary level within the Australian Public Service is the normal practice. I can certainly take it on notice and see if Mr Combet has anything further to add.

**Answer:**

The Chief Commissioner's remuneration was benchmarked both against similar departmental positions, and a number of statutory positions determined by the Remuneration Tribunal rates in Part 2 of Determination 2010/10.

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<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	70
<b>Program:</b>	1.3		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	ASCD		
<b>Topic:</b>	Climate Commission		
<b>Hansard Page EC:</b>	EC 26		

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I have read a newspaper report that suggests that Mr Flannery does have shares in a company called Geodynamics. It is only a newspaper report so I cannot vouch for its accuracy. It would be interesting to know, though, would it not? Could you take on notice and see if the register of interest does show that he has those sorts of interests? I am sure in his defence if that is not true, it would be good for the public to know that this newspaper report that I am quoting from is not accurate.

**Senator Wong**—We will check what further information we can or cannot give you but the general approach, in relation to these types of appointments, is that the government is advised of conflicts of interest potentials in relation to a whole range of board appointments. Certainly in my portfolio that is a standard part of the documentation that comes forward; it would have been when you were a minister too. I do not believe there is a practice in general terms of publishing the financial information of everybody the government appoints to a position.

**Answer:**

Each Commissioner provided details of potential conflicts of interest to the Australian Government prior to appointment.

The information provided by the Commissioners is personal information that is covered by the Privacy Act.