

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio
Additional Budget Estimates 2009
26 February 2009

Question: AR-9
Topic: NTIRP Activation for Global Financial Crisis
Proof Hansard Page: E48

Senator Ronaldson asked:

Senator RONALDSON—When were those informal discussions between the monitoring group members and, I presume, the department? When did those informal discussions take place in relation to a course of action?

Dr Tucker—In relation to the Victorian bushfires?

Senator RONALDSON—No, in relation to the global financial crisis.

Dr Tucker—I could not pinpoint the exact date as to when they started, but we have been in contact with them over quite an extended period as the global financial crisis has unfolded.

Senator RONALDSON—Given that the operations of the monitoring group I presume are public to the extent of when meetings et cetera take place, can you take on notice when those discussions were held, whom they were held with, and any correspondence between the parties in relation to a decision to not implement the NTIRP in relation to the global financial crisis.

Dr Tucker—If I might clarify your request, we will of course take your question on notice. We have made clear that this was not a formal decision. It was a discussion amongst parties and we will, as you request, give you the details of the time and format in which those discussions took place.

Ms Madden—Before leaving this, could I also just point out that the SARS crisis was in 2003. I made an error there. That was the last formal comprehensive review of NTIRP. There was an internal review conducted by the former Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources in 2007.

Answer:

On 9 October 2008, a member of the National Tourism Incident Response Plan (NTIRP) Monitoring Group from the Australian Tourism Export Council contacted the Head of Tourism Division by email to enquire whether the NTIRP would be activated in response to the Global Financial Crisis.

According to the NTIRP, the Head of Tourism Division has the authority to consider whether an issue should be raised with the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT) for consideration of the NTIRP activation level.

Following a departmental discussion with senior management responsible for the NTIRP, a decision was made that the Global Financial Crisis was considered at that point out of scope of the plan, and a reply was sent to the NTIRP Monitoring Group member by email on the same day. Industry members of the NTIRP were copied in on both emails. No other NTIRP Monitoring Group members subsequently raised the possibility of activating the NTIRP regarding the Global Financial Crisis, however the Global Financial Crisis has been placed on the agenda for the next ASCOT meeting which will be held in Perth on 1 April. Other NTIRP discussions have occurred in the interim regarding the Victorian bushfires and there have been consultations with the NTIRP Monitoring Group.

The NTIRP is designed to respond to major incidents that imply a significant and specific threat to visitors and thereby the tourism industry, with a beginning and end date and/or requiring a specific incident recovery phase. While it was recognised that the financial environment would have a significant impact on the tourism industry, the Australian Government has (and continues to) put in place a range of measures to respond to the Global Financial Crisis.

The operations of the Monitoring Group are not made public.