

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Comments made by Dr Whetton – An Inconvenient Truth

REFERENCE: Written Question –Senator Bernardi

QUESTION No.: AI-69

In 2006 the CSIRO's Dr Penny Whetton said the following of An Inconvenient Truth: "Its scientific basis is very sound." ('An Inconvenient Truth or opportunism? You decide', The Age, 9 Sept 2006). Given that since then a number of errors have been found in An Inconvenient Truth (such as the judge in the UK's High Court 2007 ruling on nine erroneous statements in the film) does the CSIRO stand by the comment made in 2006 by Dr Whetton?

ANSWER

CSIRO stands by the comment made by Dr Whetton that the scientific basis of the film "An Inconvenient Truth" is sound; i.e. that anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are contributing to global warming and changes in the planet's climate.

The United Kingdom (UK) High Court 2007 ruling referred to in the question is in the context of a case between a member of the public and the UK Secretary of State for Education and Skills regarding whether a pack of material distributed to UK schools (including the film "An Inconvenient Truth") contravened statutory considerations in the UK's Education Act in sections ss406 and ss407. These sections relate to preventing political indoctrination and ensuring the balanced treatment of political views.

The "errors" in the film which were considered by the judge were not about the fundamental premise of anthropogenic climate change as presented in the film but about the interpretation by the film-makers of some aspects of the science where uncertainties remain, and the film-makers' own interpretation of impacts resulting from a changing climate.

Reference:

England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court) Decisions

<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2007/2288.html>