

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio  
Budget Estimates Hearing 2008-09  
2-3 June 2008

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

**TOPIC:** Media Releases

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Eggleston

**QUESTION No. BI-10**

Earlier on this year the Minister sent out written instructions to CSIRO that all of its media releases were to be cleared through the Minister's office which some people have taken as a grotesque attempt at gagging and scientific censorship:

- (a) could you please advise us as to what involvement the Minister's office or the Department has in CSIRO media releases; and
- (b) are they still able to veto them if they are not in line with the Government's views?

**ANSWER**

- (a) If a CSIRO media release contains quotes from the Minister or directly refers to the Minister or the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, it is sent to the Minister's office or the Department to check the accuracy of these quotes prior to release. The Minister's office focuses on the quotes and not on the CSIRO science referred to in the draft release.

CSIRO as a Commonwealth statutory authority provides the Minister's office with advance notification of significant matters occurring within or affecting CSIRO, or potentially impacting on the Minister and the portfolio. The impending release of reports and papers relating to Government policies and programs is notified to the Minister. Such advance notifications routinely cover material which is often subsequently included in CSIRO media releases.

- (b) CSIRO media releases are about CSIRO science and research matters and do not comment on Government policy or programs. CSIRO releases are not subject to Ministerial veto except where they contain quotes from the Minister or directly refer to the Minister or Department as noted above.