

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates 3-5 June 2008

Question: bet 113

Topic: Indigenous Art - Fraud

Hansard Page: E71

Senator Eggleston asked:

Senator EGGLESTON—Mr Samuel, last year, as you may know, the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, as I mentioned in the February estimates, brought down a report on Indigenous art. I notice that you had an article in the *Northern Territory News* in February this year regarding the Indigenous art market. It said that you had started distributing information and fact sheets to galleries and art centres about fraud and malpractice in the Indigenous art area. Could you tell us what you are doing in that area? One of the specific recommendations of that report was that the ACCC set up a special Indigenous art unit. There is a lot of fraud in this area. As you know, it is a \$600 million a year business. Have you been offered funding by the federal government for this purpose?

Mr Samuel—There are a few questions there. I think it would be better if we take that question on notice and give you a proper report on it.

Answer

Senator Eggleston's statement raises the following issues:

- a) ACCC activity in the indigenous art and craft sector
- b) Refers to a recommendation in a report on indigenous art by the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts that the ACCC set up a special indigenous arts unit
- c) Queries whether the ACCC has been offered funding by the federal government for the purpose of setting up a special indigenous arts unit/investigate fraud in the Indigenous arts and craft sector.

Answer:

- a) See ACCC answer to Question on Notice BET 8.
- b) The ACCC notes that the June 2007 Report from the Senate Inquiry into Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector did not contain a specific recommendation that the ACCC establish a unit dedicated to Indigenous art and craft issues.

As noted by Mr Mark Pearson, Executive General Manager, Enforcement and Compliance ACCC, at the 25 February 2008 hearing of the Senate Standing Committee on Economics, the ACCC does not have a specific stand-alone Indigenous art unit. During the public hearing conducted by the Senate Inquiry

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Committee on 23 February 2007, Senator Ronaldson asked Mr Nigel Ridgway, General Manager, Compliance Strategies ACCC whether consideration would be given to the implementation of a dedicated group within the ACCC to address concerns in the Indigenous art and craft sector. In response to that enquiry, Mr Ridgway noted the existence of an existing ACCC mechanism - an internal reference group focussed on Indigenous consumer concerns - which deals with these issues¹.

The ACCC's internal Indigenous Reference Group is a subgroup of its internal Disadvantaged and Vulnerable (D&V) Consumer Reference Group. The Reference Group meets on a quarterly basis. The objective of the group is to coordinate the ACCC's efforts on behalf of D&V consumers including Indigenous Australians. The group brings together a range of staff from ACCC offices nationally. It encourages the collaboration of intelligence and expertise on key issues of concern to disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers and facilitates a coordinated approach to identifying and responding to these issues. This collaboration ensures the ACCC is well-positioned to identify and respond to pertinent trade practices issues for Indigenous communities.

- c) See ACCC answer to Question on Notice BET 8.

¹ Hansard: Transcript of Senate Inquiry Committee hearing, 23 February 2007, ECITA 44