

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2010-11
31 May 2010

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Fireproof roof spaces research

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard 31 May 2010, E25)

QUESTION No.: BI-14

Senator COLBECK—I have a question about the building research. When is the stuff you are doing in Victoria with fireproof roof spaces and things of that nature going to be published?

Dr Johnson—That work is currently being written up. It will feed into a process that relates to the Australian Building Codes, which is administered by Standards Australia, so my expectation is that the outcomes of that research will feed into a well-established and sophisticated process for bringing new knowledge to bear on Australian building codes.

Senator COLBECK—I was just interested in when we might be able to get hold of it.

Dr Johnson—I would be happy to supply you with a summary of the work to date if you are interested in it.

ANSWER

In April 2010, CSIRO scientists 'flame-tested' a steel-framed house near Mogo on the New South Wales south coast to ascertain how the structure would stand up to realistic bushfire conditions. This project was undertaken for the National Association of Steel Framed Housing.

Fire researchers considered that a house constructed predominantly of steel should be able to survive in the flame zone of a real bushfire, assuming that windows or other external openings have not been breached and might provide a straightforward and affordable building option for bushfire-prone areas. The house, designed by CSIRO and Bushfire CRC researchers, was constructed almost entirely from steel and featured a non-flammable roof cavity.

Initial conclusions from the burn-over event are that the floors and roof performed well against the fire but that the type of walling system used in such a house needs more consideration.

Detailed results of the flame testing are currently being prepared for the client and are expected to be made publicly available by September 2010.