

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

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SCIENTIST

TOPIC: Briefings provided to the Prime Minister

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard 20 October 2010, E12)

QUESTION No: SI-8

Senator BUSHBY—What about direct briefings? How often would you provide a direct briefing?

Prof. Sackett—I do provide direct written briefings when I feel there is a matter that should be brought to the attention of the Prime Minister.

Senator BUSHBY—Would you be able to detail how often you give direct written briefings to the Prime Minister—probably not today, but if you would take it on notice?

Prof. Sackett—Yes.

Senator BUSHBY—Have you given any personal direct briefings?

Prof. Sackett—One.

Senator BUSHBY—What was the subject matter of the briefing?

Prof. Sackett—I am just conferring about the appropriateness of the level of detail at which I could share that information.

Senator BUSHBY—I do not want any detail. I just want to know what the subject was.

Prof. Sackett—I can say that it was related to matters that were before the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.

Senator BUSHBY—Did the Prime Minister request that briefing or did you seek an audience to brief her. Firstly, which Prime Minister? What date was the briefing?

Prof. Sackett—This was to the prior Prime Minister.

Senator BUSHBY—Do you know what date it was?

Prof. Sackett—I do not the date off the top of my head.

Senator BUSHBY—Can you take on notice the date of that briefing?

Prof. Sackett—Yes.

ANSWER

The Chief Scientist takes every reasonable opportunity to engage with the Prime Minister. Direct written briefings are provided to the Prime Minister through a number of mechanisms. First, as required by her contract, the Chief Scientist advises the Prime Minister through the Portfolio Minister (the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Hon Kim Carr), via written briefs and advice provided to Minister Carr. These are provided on a regular basis, both in her monthly reports to the Minister, and in additional written material presented to Minister Carr during her direct meetings with him. Occasionally, the Chief Scientist has sent written advice to the Prime Minister directly or through Advisers in the Prime Minister's Office. In addition, the Prime Minister is provided with written briefs as part of the process associated with the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.

The personal direct briefing between the Chief Scientist and the former Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd occurred on 5 June 2009.