

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS QUESTION
(Supplementary Budget Estimates 20 October – 21 October)

Question: SBT 167

Topic: OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM—Thank you. So you have two cases ongoing. Mr Colmer has attended a couple of meetings. This might be germane to the meetings that Mr Colmer has attended: what is the Australian government's position on calls to strengthen the text of the guidelines for the current review of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises? There are obviously calls from several society groups and some governments to strengthen the guidelines in regard to human rights; free, prior and informed consent; due diligence; supply chains; transparency; and disclosure, among other matters. Has the Australian government got a formal position, have we put a draft text, or is there any documentary position that you can provide for us that we are taking into these negotiations?

Mr Di Giorgio—I do not believe that the government yet has a formal position on changing the text.

Senator LUDLAM—When will we be developing one, and will you be seeking guidance or input from Australian NGOs, for example?

Mr Di Giorgio—I will have to take that on notice.

Senator LUDLAM—That would be great. It would be good to know what your program of work is in relation to that review and whether there is any intention to engage with Australian civil society or indeed the industry.

Answer:

The Australian National Contact Point met with interested parties, including NGOs, academics and business, on the update of the Guidelines in June 2010 and is planning further consultations later this year through to early 2011 to appraise them of the status of the review of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and to seek their views. No formal position has been proposed by the Australian Government, suffice to say that it is envisaged that the Guidelines should further clarify and build on the existing Guidelines.