

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
26 November 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Science Show – Comments by Williams and Lewandowsky

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, Monday 26 November 2012, Page 2)

QUESTION No.: SI-196

Senator BUSHBY: Thank you, Professor Chubb, for agreeing to appear for this extra estimates hearing given that you were unavailable at the last estimates. Firstly, I wonder whether your attention has been drawn to the comments that were made on the Science Show on ABC radio on Saturday by Robyn Williams and Dr Stephan Lewandowsky. I am asking in the context of the comments you have made publicly and to this committee about the importance of civility in the climate change debate. On that show a link was drawn between climate change sceptics, paedophiles, drug traffickers and people responsible for causing asbestosis. Are you aware of that?

Prof. Chubb: No.

Senator BUSHBY: Could you take on notice those comments and provide us with any comments you may have as to the appropriateness of that in that context?

Prof. Chubb: Sure, I am happy to do that.

Senator CAMERON: I am not sure Robyn Williams is a scientist. I am not sure whether Professor Chubb should be asked to comment on every piece of ABC commentary, or commentary on any channel. If you are prepared to take it on notice, Professor Chubb, that is fine, but I do not think your job is to be the shot gun for bad behaviour on any channel or on any media outlet. That is my position, that it is not your job. If you want to comment on it that is fine, but I do not think it is an appropriate question.

Senator BUSHBY: The context of the question was the comments that Professor Chubb had made previously.

Prof. Chubb: I do agree with civility in public debate.

Senator BUSHBY: That is right and that is the context of my question.

Prof. Chubb: I did not hear those comments.

Senator BUSHBY: I will not go into it if you are not aware of it. If you could have a look into it, that would be appreciated.

ANSWER

The role of the Chief Scientist for Australia is to provide high-level independent advice to the Prime Minister and other Ministers on matters relating to science, technology and innovation. I have no further comment.