

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

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION (CSIRO)

TOPIC: Corrections of Evidence - accountability

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Bushby

QUESTION No.: SI-70

There was a discussion at the Estimates hearing of 17 October about the obligations that the agencies and officials who appear as witnesses at such hearings have to provide accurate answers and to correct the record when an answer that has been provided at any time is false or misleading. What accountability is there within CSIRO when an answer that has been provided is false or misleading – and what action would be taken in this situation, and against whom? What level of personal responsibility would Dr Clark take for any instance of a false or misleading answer from the CSIRO?

ANSWER

All CSIRO officers who appear before Parliamentary Committees are briefed on their legal obligations when providing evidence to those Committees.

If a CSIRO officer knowingly provided false or misleading evidence that conduct would amount to a breach of the CSIRO Code of Conduct (in addition to any other sanctions that may be applied by Parliament).

If a CSIRO officer inadvertently provides false or misleading evidence, the CSIRO's expectation is that the officer would correct the record at the first available opportunity after the officer became aware of the error or after it was drawn to his or her attention. In most cases this correction would be by way of a letter to the chair of the relevant Parliamentary Committee. All responses to Questions of Notice are cleared by a senior officer of the CSIRO prior to submission.

Dr Clark, like all CSIRO officers, has personal responsibility for her own evidence.