

Attachment E

**Letter from Chair, ECITA committee to Mr
Meadows**

15 March 2007

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Mr Geoff Meadows
Manager, Park Services, Northern Region
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
PO Box 2066
CAIRNS QLD 4870

Dear Mr Meadows,

The Senate Standing Committee on the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts recently wrote to you in connection with an allegation regarding your treatment of witness Dr Williams, who appeared before the committee at a hearing in Cairns on 30 June 2006. It has received in response correspondence on your behalf from Mr Campbell, Queensland Deputy Crown Solicitor, regarding this case (dated 9 March 2007).

In his letter of 9 March Mr Campbell asked that the exact terms of the allegations be made available. The Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee (ECITA committee) considered this request at its meeting of 15 March 2007.

This committee, under the Senate's Privileges Resolutions (see attachment A), has a responsibility to ascertain the facts of the matter when it has any reason to believe that a person has '...been subjected to or threatened with any penalty or injury in respect of any evidence given...'. (Senate Privilege Resolution 1(18) of 25 February 1988). The allegations of Dr Williams have given the committee reason to believe that they feel they have been subject to such behaviour and it is therefore seeking to establish the facts of the matter.

In writing to you on 2 March the ECITA committee was asking for your recollection and report on the facts in relation to the matters raised by Mr Green and Dr Williams. The committee is not required and does not seek to adjudicate the matter, but will report to the Senate. If the committee agrees that it appears that a possible breach of privilege or contempt has occurred, that will be reported and it becomes a matter for the President and / or Senate to pursue. It ultimately may be a matter of inquiry for the Senate's Committee of Privileges. That committee will investigate and adjudicate (see Senate Privilege resolutions 2 and 3). The Committee of Privileges reports its findings to the Senate. If a finding of contempt or breach of privilege is made then that committee may also recommend a penalty. The imposition of any penalty is a matter for the Senate itself.

To assist you in responding to the ECITA committee's request for the facts of the matter as you know them the committee has agreed to provide you with the relevant extracts from the

correspondence from Dr Williams. Other material in the correspondence is not relevant to the matters on which the committee is seeking your views. Those extracts are attached to this letter.

I remind you that, as correspondence to the committee, the letters from Mr Green and Dr Williams also are protected by parliamentary privilege, and thus any threat made to, or penalty imposed on, either person as a result of their writing to the committee could be considered to be a contempt of parliament.

In responding to the ECITA committee it may be useful if you are aware of the following comments made in Chapter 6 the Committee of Privileges' 125th report entitled *Parliamentary privilege Precedents, procedures and practice in the Australian Senate 1966-2005*:

The Senate and the Committee of Privileges have been gentle with persons who they have judged are unfamiliar with parliamentary processes and have no idea that their actions might constitute contempt. On the other hand, the committee in particular has reserved its harshest criticisms for persons who should have been in a position to know the law of privileges and the consequences of flouting the law. (para 6.5. Available at http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/priv_ctte/report_125/index.htm)

The committee wants to include comment on this matter in its report to the Senate on the national parks inquiry due on 29 March 2007. Accordingly it has agreed that your comments should be provided by close of business Wednesday 21 March 2007.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Eggleston', written in a cursive style.

Senator Alan Eggleston, Chair

cc: RW Campbell, Queensland Deputy Crown Solicitor

Extracts from Dr Williams' letter of 9 February 2007

- 1. I was informed that my annual work program needed changing in early October 2006, although it was approved until June 2007.**

The EPA has in place a process called a professional performance review (PPR). This is an agreement between all staff and their direct supervisors, agreed for a 12 month period and reviewed at the end of that 12 month period. My supervisor, Mark Connell and I agreed upon my PPR for 12 months on the 4 July 2006. The date of review was July 2007. I had not received any complaint from my supervisor regarding the implementation of my PPR. On the 23 October 2007, I received an email from Mark informing me that his supervisor, Geoff Meadows Manager of Park Services in the Northern Region, "was not happy" with my current PPR and wanted it "tightened up".

I have attached a copy of my PPR signed by Mark Connell and myself, and his email regarding Geoff Meadows insistence for it to be tightened up. I believe it to be one of a number of harassments aimed at annoying me and disrupting my work, because my supervisor had no problem with my work plan and it did not require review until July 2007. Further evidence that this information was sent just to harass me is that Mark did not turn up to the meeting he proposed, 31 October 2006, and did not inform me that our meeting was postponed. Indeed, I have heard nothing more of it.

- 5. During my recent unsuccessful interview for a promotion to replace my previous long-serving supervisor of the technical support unit, one of the questions I was asked was "where there is a conflict between the environment and this agency, where does your loyalty lie?" When I asked for clarification I was told that I was there to answer questions not ask them. I believe this question is a clear reference to my input into the Senate Inquiry, which the managers consider disloyalty.**

This interview occurred at the Cairns QPWS office, 15 December 2006. The interview panel consisted of Geoff Meadows, chair of the panel and as Manager Park Services, is the direct supervisor of the position to which I was applying. Also on the panel were Mark Peacock, District Manager Cape York/Dry Tropics and Rhondda Leggett, Team Leader in Park Services. The third question asked of me in the interview was "where there is a conflict between the environment and this agency, where does your loyalty lie?" This question seemed completely inappropriate to me

and I asked for the question to be repeated. After the question had been repeated, I asked how there could possibly be a conflict between the environment and our department, the Environmental Protection Agency, and asked for clarification and an example. I was told abruptly by Geoff Meadows that I was there to “answer questions not ask them, so answer the question”. Although I asked for a copy of the questions during the interview, Geoff Meadows would not allow me to have a copy, contrary to normal procedure.

I believe this question regarding loyalty is a clear reference to my submission to the Senate Inquiry and that in their opinion I did not show loyalty to the department by providing evidence that we required more resources to achieve our objectives. There is no other explanation for this incident.

7. At the time of the Cairns hearing of the Senate Inquiry, I was removed from an interview panel.

I initially stated in my 12 January 2007 letter that it was the Monday after the Senate hearing in Cairns. However, I find this incident happened several days after I had informed my supervisors of my decision to participate at the Cairns Senate hearing. That is, Wednesday 28 June 2006.

The interview panel in question was formed for the selection of the north west Queensland Resource Ranger position, which is responsible for providing assistance in natural resource management issues in the subdistrict. I have worked in north west Queensland parks since 1998. During that time I have published scientific articles on the management issues, have produced vegetation maps and reports for the various parks, undertaken fauna and vegetation monitoring and have worked closely with the rangers, including helping them implement burning operations. I also worked closely with the previous excellent incumbent of the position, who was based in Mt Isa. It was for this reason that I was asked by the north west Senior Ranger to be on the interview panel.

The interview panel chair, Senior Ranger for the north west, rang me on 28 June 2006, asking me why I had withdrawn from the interview panel. I had done no such

thing and was not aware I had been removed from the interview panel, surely an unusual occurrence. I sent an email to the District Manager Savanna and my supervisor Mark Connell. Attached is that email and the only written reply I received, from Mark, stating that "The composition of the panel and location of the ranger are district matters". I asked the Savanna District Manager in person about it and he denied any knowledge that I had been removed from the panel, claiming it must have been a higher regional decision to remove me from the panel, that is the Regional Director Clive Cook. Why the Regional Director would involve himself in subdistrict matters was never explained. I told the District Manager that I wished to be returned to the panel. My subsequent replacement told me on the day of the interviews, that he didn't want to be on the panel, but that the Savanna District Manager had telephoned him, days after I had spoken to the District Manager, begging him to be on the panel because "there was no one else available".

The reason I believe this is blatant harassment regarding my attendance at the Senate Inquiry is that I had difficulty in gaining approval for recreation leave to attend the Senate Inquiry in Cairns (see attached emails). It was only a couple of days after this that I heard I was mysteriously removed from the interview panel. The inference I received from my supervisor was that it was a mistake to attend the Cairns hearing. Incidentally, as evidence that this was not a coincidence, Mr Dave Green, who appeared at the Cairns Senate hearing with me, was also removed at roughly the same time from an interview panel, without his wishes, for a position of which he is supervisor.

9. Continued accusations that I have a history of criticizing the department.

Since sending my letter, 12 January 2007, I have again been subjected to harassment. It occurred on 1 February 2007. I was asked by my supervisor's boss Geoff Meadows to come into the District Manager's office for a chat. I was questioned about a memo I had sent to my supervisor and the Savanna District manager the day before, where I had raised my concern that our natural resource management advice was not being incorporated into management decisions. Ultimately, the only issue I was actually criticized over was that I had cced the memo to the QPWS people involved in an example I used and a person from each of the central and southern regions of QPWS, who share my concern. During this "discussion", Mr Meadows repeatedly accused me of having a history of criticizing the department. I denied this and asked for examples. All he could provide was the issue of my talking to the Minister in September 2006. I denied this was criticising the department and in any case one example does not constitute a "history". I asked Mr Meadows repeatedly to provide examples of this history and he could not. In the end he said that I knew what he was talking about. I said to him that I believed he was criticising me for participating in the Senate Inquiry into national park resourcing. Mr Meadows smirked and said something along the lines of yes of course. I pointed out to the District Manager that he had witnessed this, but he said he had not heard what was said. I told Mr Meadows that it was illegal for him to harass me on the basis of my submission to the Senate Inquiry, to which he simply smirked further.

