



Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Minister for Employment Participation,
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Senator Simon Birmingham

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for
Climate Action

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Arbib joins Garrett as guilty party in insulation debacle

Mark Arbib, the Minister responsible for coordinating the roll-out of the stimulus package has refused to say when he first became aware of inadequate training and safety issues for workers involved in the ill-fated home insulation program.

"When Mark Arbib was promoted by Kevin Rudd in February last year he was portrayed as Mr Stimulus – the man responsible to roll out work opportunities under the stimulus plan," Shadow Minister for Employment Participation Mathias Cormann said.

"We now know that the rushed and incompetent implementation of that scheme put workers and homeowners at serious risk – on four sad occasions with fatal consequences.

"Instead of providing a full account of his involvement and spelling out when he became aware of the dangers faced by workers Mark Arbib told Senate Question Time that he was 'saddened' that the program was forced to shut. What a complete lack of compassion," he said.

Mark Arbib confirmed his integral role in the development of the now scrapped Home Insulation Program, which had been identified in the Risk Management Plan provided to the Government by Minter Ellison on 9 April 2009 (page 8).

Quizzed further by Senator Birmingham he claimed to have never been told of fire or electrocution risks under the program.

"It beggars belief that these risks were never raised in his weekly meetings – and runs contrary to evidence given by Environment Department secretary Robyn Krug to today's hearing into the mismanagement of the insulation program that issues of risk were continually discussed in meetings and briefings," Senator Birmingham said.

All this raises a series of questions: Was Senator Arbib misleading the Senate when he said he attended weekly meetings on implementation? Or was he misleading the Senate when he said he was never told of the risks? Or is he simply trying to cover his own tracks to leave Peter Garrett hanging out to dry on his own?

And if they weren't discussed, and he therefore wasn't aware of the risks, how does Senator Arbib know he did everything to ensure safety? Senator Arbib can't have it both ways.

He clearly joins the hapless Peter Garrett in sharing responsibility for the mismanagement of this program, which has resulted in four deaths, 93 house fires, put tens of thousands of homes at risk, left taxpayers millions out of pocket and left the insulation industry in chaos.

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