

ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS IN WRITING – GUIDELINES FOR DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

All answers to Parliamentary Questions in Writing are to be delivered to the Clerk of the House of Representatives (Standing Order 105) through the Table Office (Suite RG-89).

Table Office Requirements

- The **Table Office** requires **5 hard copies** of each answer, together with **one** accompanying covering letter, and an electronic copy.
- Both hard and electronic copies should be sent at the same time.
- The hard copies of answers should be delivered to:

**Parliamentary Questions Officer
Table Office
Department of the House of Representatives
Suite RG-89
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600**

- The electronic copy should be sent to:

answerstoqiw.reps@aph.gov.au
 - **Attachment A** has some guidance for **formatting** Answers to Questions in Writing.
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Distribution of Answers

After the answers have been processed and cleared for distribution, copies are supplied by the Table Office to:

- The **Member** who asked the question (1 copy);
- **Hansard** (1 copy, for publication); and
- the **Press** (2 copies) (answers are sent to the press only after they have been published in Hansard).

One copy of the answer is kept by the Table Office. The Table Office also maintains a database of questions and answers.

Procedure for Transferring Parliamentary Questions in Writing

- Arrangements to transfer Questions between portfolios need to be made between the relevant Departments. Both Departments need to agree to the transfer.
- Once the transfer has been arranged, both the Departments involved must verify the transfer with the Table Office via an email to answerstoqiw.reps@aph.gov.au
- Once the transfer has been verified by the Departments, the Parliamentary Questions Officer will record the relevant details of the transfer (ie date of transfer, date the transfer will appear in Notice Paper, Departmental contact...etc) into a register and make the necessary changes to the Questions on Notice database. The Member who asked the question is notified of the transfer by email.
- The transferred Question will generally be shown in the first Notice Paper of the next block of sittings.
- Transferred questions may be answered collectively by one Minister on behalf of other Ministers, provided that all included question numbers are listed at the start of the answer, and only where the questions and their answers are identical.

Note: The Table Office must receive immediate notification when intra-portfolio and inter-portfolio transfers of Questions have been arranged. This is to ensure that the Notice Paper reflects the updated information as soon as possible.

Long Answers

- Where an answer contains a long attachment, it should be stated in the answer that the attachment is available from the House of Representatives Table Office. The attachment will be provided to the Member who asked the question, but will generally not be printed in Hansard to save resources.

Miscellaneous

The only circumstance under which Departments should write directly to the Member who asked the question is to send additional material previously foreshadowed in the answer to the question.

Any inquiries relating to Parliamentary Questions in Writing can be directed to the House of Representatives Table Office, at:

Tel. (02) 6277 4779 (answers)
Tel. (02) 6277 2388 (questions)

or

answerstoqiw.reps@aph.gov.au

Table Office
Department of the House of Representatives
September 2007

GUIDANCE TO DEPARTMENTS ON FORMATTING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN WRITING

The Department of Parliamentary Services publishes answers to questions in writing in *Hansard*. It has prepared the following formatting guidelines to assist departments in the preparation and submission of answers to questions in writing.

Detail is provided on key “Do’s and Don’ts” for departments in preparing and submitting answers to questions in writing, as well as preferred styles and formats used in the preparation of *Hansard*. For further information, please contact the Hansard Editorial Support Group on 02 6277 2832.

Do

If departments are using track changes, they should accept them all before sending electronic files.

Make sure that the date the question was asked is included.

Use the file naming convention of R####.doc (#### is the four digit question number, with question number 1 as 0001)

Don’t

Do not use auto numbering.

Do not use Microsoft Word’s footnotes function; instead, key footnotes in at the end of questions

Do not use soft returns to force line breaks (*Shift Enter*)

Do not use multiple space bands to pad out indents

Do not provide answers to questions as a graphic or PDF file.

The following example of an answer to a question in writing is provided as a template. It contains all the relevant styles that are used in the preparation of *Hansard*. Departments are asked to apply the styles wherever possible.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

QUESTION

QUESTION NUMBER: 1234
DATE ASKED: 14 September 2006

Question

MR MEMBER asked the Minister for (*Portfolio*), in writing, on (*Date*): [use **.Block** Style]
First line of question sentence [use **Small Block** Style]

[OR]

MR MEMBER asked the Minister representing the Minister for (*Portfolio*), in writing, on (*Date*): [use **.Block** Style]

First line of question sentence [use **Small Block** Style]

Numbered Lists

- (1) First level Numbered list [use **Small Block (I)** Style]
- If there is a second paragraph needed to line up [use **Small Block (I)** Style] and one Tab
- (2) (a) First and Second level Numbered list [use **Small Block(1a)** Style]
- (b) Second level Numbered list [use **Small Block (a)** Style]
If there is a second paragraph needed to line up [use **Small Block (a)** Style] and one Tab
- (i) Third Level Numbered list [use **Small Block (I)** Style]
If there is a second paragraph needed to line up [use **Small Block (I)** Style] and one Tab

Answer

MR MINISTER - The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows: [use **.Block** Style]

[OR]

MR MINISTER - The Minister for (*Portfolio*) has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question: [use **.Block** Style]

First line of answer sentence [use *Small Block* Style]

Numbered Lists

- (1) First level Numbered list [use *Small Block (1)* Style]
- If there is a second paragraph needed to line up[use *Small Block (1)* Style] and one Tab
- (2) (a) First and Second level Numbered list [use *Small Block(1a)* Style]
- (b) Second level Numbered list [use *Small Block (a)* Style]
- If there is a second paragraph needed to line up [use *Small Block (a)* Style] and one Tab
- (i) Third Level Numbered list [use *Small Block (I)* Style]
- If there is a second paragraph needed to line up [use *Small Block (I)* Style] and one Tab

Bullet Lists

- First level Bullet list [use *.Bullet Small* Style]
- Second level Bullet list [use *.BulletSmallIndent* Style]

Table Styles

Table Style [use *Simple Table 1* Style]

Table Text [use *Small Table Left* Style]

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|---|--------------|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| • | Table Header | • | Table Header | • | Table Header |
| • | Table Text | • | Table Text | • | Table Text |
| • | Table Text | • | Table Text | • | Table Text |
