

Defence Portfolio

COMMITTEE INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 1)

Julian Hill MP asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on date 14 April 2021:

Mr HILL: Ewen Jones?

Mr Jordan: Yes.

Mr HILL: He was appointed, what, five or six months after he lost his seat in Queensland for the Liberal Party?

CHAIR: Order, Deputy Chair. I'll take that as a comment.

Mr HILL: No, it's a question, actually, Chair.

Mr Jordan: Yes, I think that is correct.

Mr HILL: How did that come about?

Mr Jordan: There was an appointments process where the responsible minister for DHA—which is usually the defence minister but at the moment is the Minister for Defence Personnel—will through an instrument of appointment appoint a board member when a vacancy becomes available.

Mr HILL: I get the procedure. How did they just select Ewen Jones as the most qualified person to sit on the DHA board?

Mr Jordan: I don't know that.

Mr HILL: Anyone? Who signs the paperwork? Does it come through you, Department of Defence?

Mr Grzeskowiak: When board appointments become available, the Department of Finance and the Department of Defence would look to see if there are candidates that they were aware of. I understand the Department of Finance—

Mr HILL: Failed Liberal politicians?

Mr Grzeskowiak: have lists of people who might be suitable. We would put in a view—

Mr HILL: So was Mr Ewen Jones on this list of suitable people that you or the Department of Finance came up with?

Mr Grzeskowiak: I don't know the answer to that question.

Mr HILL: Can you take that on notice? Perhaps it came from the minister.

Mr Grzeskowiak: I couldn't answer that question. I can take it on notice and have a look.

Julian Hill MP – The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the Member's question:

As per clause 116 of the *Australian Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Cabinet Handbook, 14th Edition* (Cabinet Handbook), Defence Housing Australia's Board positions are Significant Appointments.

In proposing Board appointments for a Government Business Enterprise, ministers follow the procedures set out in the Cabinet Handbook and the *Commonwealth Government Business Enterprises – Governance and Oversight Guidelines: Resource Management Guide No. 126* (GBE Guidelines).

As per clause 2.13 of the GBE Guidelines, and consistent with clause 114 of the Cabinet Handbook, where a Board appointment is proposed, Shareholder Ministers must seek the approval of the Prime Minister, or at his/her discretion the Cabinet prior to any appointment.

Given the strict confidentiality of all Cabinet proceedings and documentation, the details and deliberations pertaining to Significant Appointments should not be publically disclosed as per standard convention.