



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Senator Wendy Askew
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chair

At the 2021-22 Additional Estimates hearing, I committed to reviewing my evidence at previous Estimates hearings related to work undertaken by Boston Consulting Group for the Department of Social Services during 2020 (page 8 of Hansard, 17 February 2022). I have reviewed relevant transcripts and I am writing to clarify evidence provided to the Committee.

Clarification of evidence provided at the 2021-22 Budget Estimates Hearing on 3 June 2021 regarding work undertaken by Boston Consulting Group

In answering a question from Senator Gallagher (page 31 of Hansard, 3 June 2021) regarding the scope of work undertaken by Boston Consulting Group (BCG), I said:

“I’d have to refresh my memory because it looked at a range of cohorts on income support, from memory.”

I confirm that it did look at a range of cohorts. I note that this was referred to in the response to Question on Notice SQ21-000635, provided to the Committee on 27 October 2021.

In answering a question from Senator Gallagher (pages 25 and 26 of Hansard, 3 June 2021) regarding a report being produced by BCG, I said:

“To go to the point I think you’re raising, there wasn’t a report as such produced by Boston Consulting in relation to that work.”

BCG was contracted to assist the department with research, data and analysis on areas identified by the department. BCG produced research materials, presentations, charts and modelling outputs. This work was generally presented to the Department through a series of slides.

As the Committee is aware, some of the slides have been released by the department on 16 December 2021 in response to an FOI request. Those slides include markings such as

“draft for discussion” and indicate that it also included meeting agendas. These slides were produced over a series of different dates. On this basis, I did not consider that what was produced met the definition of a report.

I also note that the work order for BCG required them to “provide the department a report regarding the mid-term review of the DES program” and in relation to other components of the contract “provide the department ongoing research”.

Clarification of evidence provided at the 2021-22 Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings on 28 October 2021 regarding the procurement of the contract with by Boston Consulting Group

In answering a question from Senator Gallagher (page 105 of Hansard, 28 October 2021) regarding the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines, I said:

“There are a couple of things. Firstly, it is consistent with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines— “

I based this answer on a response previously given to the Committee by another senior official. I accept that I erred in not checking the accuracy of this statement before responding to the question. I apologise to the Committee.

In terms of the correctness of the statement itself, this has been addressed in the material being provided to the Committee by the Secretary of the department, following his desktop review into the procurement.

Yours sincerely



Matt Flavel
Deputy Secretary
Social Security

23 March 2022