



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Meghan Quinn PSM

Senator Jess Walsh
Chair
Senate Economics Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Walsh

On reviewing the Proof Hansard of the testimony given by the Department of Industry, Sciences, Energy and Resources at the Senate Estimates hearing on 26 October 2023, we find that some of the information provided to the Committee would benefit from clarification and correction.

The following exchange occurred between the Hon Senator Andrew Bragg; Rebecca Manen acting CEO of the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation; and myself:

Senator Bragg: ...what process did you go through to appoint a chief executive?

Ms Manen: The process to appoint the permanent CEO of the corporation is currently underway. The corporation has engaged Johnson Partners, an executive search firm, to assist with that process. As part of that process, a range of candidates are being considered, from a range of sources, including the public advertising of the role.

Senator Bragg: Who chose Johnson Partners?

Ms Manen: Johnson Partners was selected following a competitive process that was undertaken.

Senator Bragg: That's great, but the question was: who?

Ms Manen: The process was undertaken by the department of industry, ahead of the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation being established, as part of the reasonable preparatory activities that the department undertook ahead of the commencement of the act.

Senator Bragg: I'm sorry to be that person, but I'm just trying to understand who signed off on that contract.

Ms Manen: It was the department.

Ms Quinn: Just to clarify: when the act was enlivened and the board was appointed, there was clearly a kind of transitional arrangement in setting up the corporation. As has been the case with other entities that the government has created, we had a separate body of people in the department setting up the entity. They were doing all the preparatory work, such as the legal foundation documents, in the preparatory process for the National Reconstruction Fund. That information was provided to the board, once it became an entity. We did quite a lot of work on legal advice on the accompanying corporation documents. I think the process was done within the department, with a panel and a competitive process and then the selection of that partner. The commissioning of their actions, and the time lines and things like that, happened at the point where we had the board in place and the board took over that process. So there was a transition period there.

Senator Bragg: Did you sign off on this, as secretary, or was it one of your delegates?

Ms Quinn: No. It was one of the delegates. That was in the proxy entity, and that individual transitioned to the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation as part of the set-up of the corporation.

It has been brought to my attention that whilst the person who ran the process transitioned across to the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation, the delegate who made the decision remained in the department.

I apologise for any inconvenience caused and ask that you alert other members of the Committee to this correction.

Yours sincerely

29 November 2023