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Senator the Hon Nita Green
Committee Chair
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Green

The Home Affairs Portfolio appeared at the Senate Estimates Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee hearing on 12 February 2024 (Ref No: 27702).

In my capacity as Acting First Assistant Secretary, Service Design and Delivery Programs Division, I gave evidence to the Senate and have reviewed the Hansard record. In relation to my testimony, I have become aware of the need to correct a response I made to a question from Senator McKim.

The particular reference for correction is on page 17 (**Attachment A**) in response to the question from Senator McKIM:

...If you could come back on notice, that would be appreciated. Just to be clear, I'd like to know if any money was spent on golf umbrellas and, if so, how much....

My response to this question was *"There was a very small invoice for golf umbrellas, which was disputed and not paid."*

Subsequently I have been advised that this response is not an accurate reflection of the matter and I am providing the following correction of evidence in response to the question:

The Department received an invoice that included the purchase of 10 golf umbrellas at a total cost of AUD \$100.14. The Department initially disputed the claimed bill on the understanding that it related to PPE (personal protective equipment), which was not eligible to be treated as a pass through cost. However, it was later determined that the cost related to a different category (tools and maintenance) which was eligible to be treated as a pass through cost, and the invoice was subsequently accepted and paid.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this clarification, which will ensure that correct information has been provided to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely

Drew Layton
Acting First Assistant Secretary
Service Design and Delivery Programs
7 May 2024

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Ms Foster: As I said before, the shortcomings existed at a number of points in the system in our overarching systems, in the specifics of the contracts and in the way in which we were sharing information within the department.

Senator McKIM: Minister, your government put in place, quite rightly, the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. Quite rightly, you put that in place. And that royal commission, with the powers that it had to compel evidence and compel sworn testimony, got to the bottom of how that disgraceful episode unfolded. Why will you not put in place a royal commission into these situations where this department entered into contracts with companies who were engaging in corrupt activities, circumventing sanctions and engaging in drug related activities? Why won't you put in place a royal commission, leaving aside the humanitarian calamity of offshore detention? Why did robodebt, quite rightly, justify a royal commission when this scandal does not, in your view?

Senator Watt: I'm not going to answer why the government decides that a royal commission is warranted in some areas and not others. Each matter will be considered on its merits. I think the important thing here is that, through commissioning the review by Mr Richardson, the government has acted on the very serious allegations that were made again, many of which were at the time that Mr Dutton was the Minister for Home Affairs. So the government has taken action through commissioning Mr Richardson's review. He has made recommendations, which are now being implemented. So it's not as if we're not taking action; we have taken action.

Senator McKIM: Was \$6 million really spent on golf umbrellas in Nauru, Ms Foster? Do we know that?

Ms Foster: Let me just have that checked.

Senator McKIM: It was \$6 million of Australian taxpayers' money spent on golf umbrellas in Nauru.

Mr Willard: Senator, I think you're referring to evidence that was provided in an AAT matter. That was actually about a different matter, but some of the evidence provided was related to Nauru. Obviously I won't comment on the extant matter that the AAT is looking at, but we have looked at that claim and haven't found any evidence to support it.

Senator McKIM: Was any money spent on golf umbrellas in Nauru that ultimately came from the Australian taxpayer?

Mr Willard: I'd have to come back to you on detail, but my understanding is that we've looked at the claim about golf umbrellas and there was nothing to suggest

Senator McKIM: If you could come back on notice, that would be appreciated. Just to be clear, I'd like to know if any money was spent on golf umbrellas and, if so, how much. Also, while we're on that matter, could you just take on notice whether the money the department paid to contractors was used to train any guard dogs that belonged to senior Nauruan political figures.

Mr Willard: We can take that on notice, unless Mr Layton has something to add.

Senator McKIM: Did someone wish to add something there?

Mr Layton: There was a very small invoice for golf umbrellas, which was disputed and not paid.

Senator McKIM: What about for a guard dog, or guard dogs, for senior Nauru political figures?

Mr Layton: There's no evidence to support that.

Senator McKIM: No invoices that you're aware of?

Mr Layton: No.

Senator McKIM: Alright. Thanks. I've just got some questions on the New Zealand arrangement, which traditionally we've done in cross-portfolio. Ms Foster, if folks aren't here for that we can

CHAIR: You've got the call for another five minutes, and if we've dealt with it in cross-portfolio before, that's fine.

Ms Foster: Perhaps you could just give me an indication of where you're going and I'll make sure

Senator McKIM: It's really an update in terms of whether obviously with the arrangement for 150 people per year, we're sort of well into that process now. Has that quota been met? Is that I don't like to use these terms when we're talking about human beings a 'use it or lose it' scenario? If there are places not taken up in one year does it roll into next year? Are we on track to resettle 450 refugees over three years? And are any discussions underway as to an extension of that arrangement?

Ms Foster: We normally consider that an outcome 2 issue. So, it would be great if I could have the right officials here for that.