

Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee

Inquiry into the operation of the Administrative Arrangements Order –
14 March 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Ministers' responsibilities

Question reference number: 1

Senator: McAllister

Type of question: asked on Tuesday, 14 March 2017, Hansard page 16

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 16 March 2017

Question:

CHAIR: I am trying to understand, then, how that division of responsibility between the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Defence Industry works in practice. Do you have some internal documentation about which functions are the responsibility of which minister?

Mr Sargeant: Yes, we have a breakdown of ministerial responsibilities between the three ministers who work in relation to Defence. That is on the minister's website. Depending on the issue, we deal with the minister responsible for that and we inform the other ministers where appropriate.

CHAIR: Is there no more detailed information than that provided on the website? Is there no internal document which goes into any greater level of detail?

Mr Sargeant: We expect our senior people to understand the work of ministers and to respond to them appropriately.

CHAIR: Is that a reasonable expectation? In enabling them to fulfil that expectation, do you provide any written guidance about what each minister is responsible for beyond that provided on your website?

Mr Sargeant: We have internal documentation that advises people across the department about what each minister is responsible for. We have documentation that advises them on how they should engage with ministers and ministerial offices.

CHAIR: Can you provide that documentation to the committee?

Mr Sargeant: Yes, I assume so.

Answer:

Staff refer to the website for guidance on the Ministers' responsibilities at www.minister.defence.gov.au. Additional guidance is provided through training courses on engaging and advising Government and Ministers.