

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Subcommittee of Cabinet

Senator: Hawkins

Question reference number: 0213

Type of question: Hansard, pages 40-41, 22 September 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 October 2020

Number of pages: 1.

Question:

CHAIR: There's the refresh group with Minister Hume, Minister Ruston, Minister Cash and Minister Andrews. Do you attend those meetings?

Ms Hawkins: I think you might be referencing something that was in the press recently.

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Hawkins: I'm not entirely sure about those meetings, but I can say I'm not part of that.

CHAIR: So you don't attend those meetings.

Ms Hawkins: I saw those press reports, so I'm not making any comment about whether or not it did happen, but I'm saying I'm not part of—

CHAIR: You're not there. You're not supporting that.

Ms Hawkins: Whether it happens or not, I'm not there, but I am regularly supporting the Minister for Women.

CHAIR: Are you aware of whether that group is a subcommittee of the cabinet? Is it a formal group?

Ms Hawkins: I'd have to take it on notice.

Answer:

Membership of the Cabinet and its committees is a decision for the Prime Minister.

The membership and terms of reference of Cabinet committees are publicly available on the Australian Government Directory (www.directory.gov.au).

There is no 'refresh group' Cabinet committee with Minister Hume, Minister Ruston, Minister Cash and Minister Andrews as members.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Distribution of COVID-19 domestic violence package

Senator: Brockman

Question reference number: 0214

Type of question: Hansard, pages 41-42, 22 September 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 October 2020

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator BROCKMAN: I want to explore with Ms Hawkins the issue that was raised by an earlier witness about the \$150 million for domestic violence support and the implication that perhaps only half of it had been rolled out. Could you just talk me through, from your perspective, where that \$150 million COVID-19 domestic violence package is in terms of distribution?

Ms Hawkins: Yes, I can. I was listening this morning to parts of the testimony and I did hear that. As I said in my opening statement, the \$130 million that the government had allocated to the states and territories out of the overall \$150 million COVID support package has actually now all been allocated to the states and territories.

Senator BROCKMAN: That has been distributed?

Ms Hawkins: It has been distributed, yes. It has not just been committed, but has actually been distributed.

CHAIR: It has left you.

Ms Hawkins: It has left the Commonwealth.

CHAIR: But whether it has left the state and territories is now the question.

Ms Hawkins: I think that, when I had a look at the meeting outcomes documents from women's safety ministers meeting on 7 August, all of the \$130 million package hadn't actually been allocated back then. That women's safety ministers meeting back on 7 August was looking in part at what the best way was to allocate the remaining \$68.25 million under the national partnerships. But what I'm happy to be able to share with the committee today is that the full allocation of the \$130 million in that COVID support package has now been distributed to the states and territories.

Senator BROCKMAN: Are details of that known?

Ms Hawkins: My colleague Ms Brayshaw and I recently appeared before the House of Representatives committee that is looking into family, domestic and sexual violence, and my colleague the deputy secretary from the Department of Social Services did share that information then. I'd have to take on notice if it had been made public before then, but it has definitely been provided in evidence to the House of Representatives committee recently.

Senator BROCKMAN: If you could get that to us, that would be good.

Answer:

On 16 September 2020, the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, and the Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, issued a joint media release confirming that the states and territories had now received the full \$130 million allocation, to help frontline family and domestic violence services across Australia adapt to meet changing needs during the coronavirus pandemic. The joint release included details of the total funding provided for each jurisdiction under this package.

<https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/payne/2020/6825-million-frontline-domestic-violence-support-services>.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Provision of advice regarding social infrastructure

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0218

Type of question: Hansard, pages 49-50, 22 September 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 October 2020

Number of pages: 2.

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Earlier we were talking and Ms Lyons was providing evidence about what she referred to as social infrastructure and I call the care economy. We were looking at those areas of the workforce that are strongly feminised and where we need additional workforce. Have you provided any advice to government about the need to invest in the care economy within a framework in which not only do we need those services—for example, aged care—but we also need to make sure that we're providing opportunities in a recovery plan for women in the workforce, ensuring that the feminised workforce is also supported? For example, there's lots of money going into construction, which is mainly male dominated. What advice, if any, have you provided to government in terms of the heavily feminised workforce?

Ms Hawkins: In terms of that issue, I mentioned earlier on in our evidence this afternoon that the Minister for Women has conducted a number of roundtables since she has become Minister for Women. Indeed, one of the roundtables that she had was on COVID. I think it was back in May. One of the participants in that COVID roundtable did go into quite some detail about the kind of issues that you're talking about. She talked about investment in social infrastructure along the lines of what you have been talking about. So definitely those issues are on our radar in the Office for Women. The Minister for Women has also heard about those issues in forums such as those roundtables. So I would say it's definitely an issue that is on our radar and on the minister's radar through that kind of advice as well.

Senator SIEWERT: Does 'being on the radar' mean that we're going to see investment in those areas? Have you provided advice that there should be investment those areas?

Ms Hawkins: In terms of what the government might do in the budget, it does go to the same kind of conversation that we were having before. You asked if there will be investment in that. It is a matter for the government where that ends up.

CHAIR: I think the question was: have you provided advice around social infrastructure, which, again, is a legitimate question for the Senate to ask a public servant, as opposed to what ends up in the budget, which is different and we accept that. But the question was: have you provided advice to government on that?

Ms Hawkins: I do want to come back to the question on notice in terms of the way I answer that question, if I may.

Answer:

Yes.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Provision of advice in relation to JobSeeker supplement

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0219

Type of question: Hansard, page 50, 22 September 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 October 2020

Number of pages: 1.

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: ...I also ask on notice whether the Office for Women provided advice on the rate of the JobSeeker payment and the impact on women that the decrease in the supplement might have.

CHAIR: I think that may take a similar response.

Ms Hawkins: We'll take it on notice.

Answer:

Yes.