

Opening Statement

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an opening statement.

At the request of the Committee, the Department has provided a submission and a response to the questions on notice from the hearing of 7 February 2020. In our response we sought to assist the committee by providing the context and circumstances of the decision we were asked about.

We respect the role of the Committee and would like to be as helpful as possible in answering the questions of the Committee. I have a document here to table this morning that seeks to do this, by providing available information in different forms, if this is more useful to the Committee.

As set out in our answers to the questions on notice, the decision making process for the Regional Jobs and Investment Packages program included consideration by Cabinet and I would like to make clear our position on answering questions that relate to cabinet in confidence materials and cabinet deliberations.

It is a longstanding practice not to disclose information about the operation and business of the Cabinet, as to do so could potentially reveal the deliberations of the Cabinet, which are confidential.

It is accepted that deliberations of the Cabinet should be able to be conducted in secrecy so as to preserve the freedom of deliberations of this body.

In answering both the questions on notice provided and any questions from the Committee today, the Department will maintain this practice.

In addition, in providing answers to the Committee, the Department has maintained the convention of not naming officials below the level of Senior Executive Service in order to protect the privacy of junior officials. This convention also extends to advisers in ministers' offices below the equivalent level of the Senior Executive Service.

Again, in answering any questions from the Committee today, the Department will maintain this practice.

As stated in our response to the questions on notice, the Department does not, under normal circumstances, comment on specific projects in order to protect the privacy of the applicant and commercial in confidence nature of the application or project. Noting however, the questions of the Committee and the fact that details of the applicant and project have now been made public through the media, the Department has provided information on the project being delivered by Nolan Meats Pty Ltd in order to clarify the record. Thank you.