

Finance and Public Administration References Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Lessons to be learned in relation to the preparation and planning for, response to and recovery efforts following the 2019-20 Australian bushfire season

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Prime Minister's decision making whilst on leave

Senator: Watt

Question reference number: 0003

Type of question: Hansard, page 31, 27 May 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 19 June 2020

Number of pages: 1.

Question:

Senator WATT: So the Prime Minister was not making any decisions on behalf of the government about the management of the bushfire crisis while he was in Hawaii?

Mr Gaetjens: I would take that on notice too, because I'm sure that even though people are away on leave they still take an interest. A person who delegates authority generally, in my bush lawyer sense, is still able to exercise authority, but I just don't know the details of that and I would prefer to take that on notice.

Answer:

Under long-standing arrangements, the Prime Minister has signed an instrument that authorises the Deputy Prime Minister, and if he is unavailable, other minister(s), to exercise the Prime Minister's powers and functions in the event of any absence from duty, and for other reasons. This authorisation would not preclude the Prime Minister from making decisions on behalf of the Government while on leave.

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Question:

Senator WATT: Can you tell the committee for what period Mr McCormack was the Acting Prime Minister in December 2019?

Mr Gaetjens: I'd have to take that on notice.

Answer:

15 to 21 December 2019.