

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Defence Annual Report 2015-16 – 17 February 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: First Principles Review implementation

Question reference number: 24

Senator: Fawcett (and Feeney)

Type of question: asked on Monday, 17 February 2017, Hansard page 20-21

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 March 2017

Question:

CHAIR: What is the benchmark for the different categories?

Mr Sargeant: It is six months for a positive vet clearance. But in the last year we have had a huge increase in productivity in that area. I need to get the figures in detail.

CHAIR: I am happy for you to take that on notice—what the benchmarks are and how you are tracking in terms of improvements in time frames. If someone is engaging with Defence in terms of any contracts, six months is a long time.

Mr Sargeant: Some go quicker; some go slower; it depends on the nature of them.

CHAIR: I am happy for you to take that on notice. It is something that I think we will keep an eye on with you. One of the issues that I wanted to flag with you on behalf of the committee is in relation to the questions on the implementation of the reform programs, particularly in your area, Ms Louis. Time does not allow us today to go into the detail that we would like to on the implementation of these programs, particularly the coordination. There is a lot of reform happening within Defence across all of these reform programs. The committee will invite you back to a private meeting to allow us to really drill down into more detail about these programs. The secretariat will be in touch with you to work out a format and a time for that. It is not a lack of interest, because we have intense interest in this. We will also be adopting a longitudinal interest in this. We will get you back more frequently so that we can go on the journey with you in a more fulsome way. I thought I would give you a bit of a heads-up on that today. We will be in touch.

Senator FAWCETT: Perhaps as preparatory work for that meeting could you to take something on notice. I think the government accepted, or accepted in principle, 75 of the 76 recommendations of the first principles review. I do not want to put an additional burden of work on you, given all those reforms, but I am assuming you have—I would be very disappointed if you did not—your own tracking mechanism of where you are up to, including whether the recommendations have been implemented or implemented in part or whether there are hurdles. Given this will be a private briefing, could I ask you to provide to the committee an insight into whatever tracking you have? I am hoping there will be minimal burden on you, but it will give us some transparency of where you assess where you are up to.

Vice Adm. Griggs: We do have that tracking mechanism. It will not be an additional burden.

Mr FEENEY: As a related thing, to add to that work, could you also set out what has been accomplished to meet the objective of reducing red tape, administrative burdens and regulatory obligations?

CHAIR: Before we can conclude, could we get just a little bit more information back from you? We are also interested in—and I understand it falls within your purview, Vice Admiral Griggs—how you coordinate and deconflict all of these reviews and their implementation. We are particularly interested in that—and in the cultural aspects as well, given that there are cultural reform aspects in all of the reform programs—and just how that is done. Again, we do not want to create an additional burden, but we will be very interested in getting further briefings from you.

Vice Adm. Griggs: I do not think that presents any problem at all.

Answer:

Specific to:

“I am assuming you have—I would be very disappointed if you did not—your own tracking mechanism of where you are up to, including whether the recommendations have been implemented or implemented in part or whether there are hurdles. Given this will be a private briefing, could I ask you to provide to the committee an insight into whatever tracking you have? I am hoping there will be minimal burden on you, but it will give us some transparency of where you assess where you are up to.” (per Hansard)

viz., how Defence monitor/track recommendations of the First Principles Review:

The First Principles Review report included a high level implementation plan and Government agreed that a more detailed implementation plan, which aligned with the high level implementation plan in the report, should be developed by 30 June 2015. The Secretary of Defence established an Implementation Committee consisting of himself as Chair, Chief of the Defence Force, Associate Secretary, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Deputy Secretary Strategic Policy and Intelligence, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Secretary People and Deputy Secretary Capability Acquisition and Sustainment. The role of the Implementation Committee is to drive the implementation and make major implementation decisions, including the closure of recommendations. Implementation is managed through five work streams:

- Strong strategic centre (Deputy Secretary Strategic Policy and Intelligence)
- Capability (Vice Chief of the Defence Force)
- Enablers (Associate Secretary)
- Behaviours (Associate Secretary)
- Work force (Associate Secretary)

Each work stream is owned by a senior leader within Defence (in brackets above).

An Implementation Office has been established to monitor and report on implementation progress. The Implementation Office coordinated the development of the detailed implementation plan and is responsible for ensuring implementation occurs in alignment with the intent of the First Principles Review. The Implementation Office is also responsible for governance of the implementation program, including reporting. A report is tabled with the Implementation Committee each week that details progress against the implementation plan.

Progress on implementation of the Review has been steady since it commenced on 1 July 2015, with 63 of the 75 recommendations complete as at 15 May 2017. As agreed on 19 October 2016, Defence provides the References Committee with a report two weeks prior to each estimates hearing on progress made to date on the implementation of the 75 recommendations from the First Principles Review.

Recommendation 6.3 of the First Principles Review called for the creation of an Oversight Board. The membership comprises the members of the First Principles Review team, Mr David Peever as Chair, the Hon Robert Hill, Mr Lindsay Tanner, Professor Peter Leahy, Mr Jim McDowell and Ms Erica Smyth. The Oversight Board's primary function is to provide advice to the Minister on the progress Defence is making in implementation of the First Principles Review. The Oversight Board receives the same papers and reporting that is provided to the Implementation Committee.

Information about the relationship between the First Principles Review and reducing red tape is available in the response to Question 28 from this hearing.