

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2013-14 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: Cross Outcome - Across Programs

Question No: 191

Topic: Freedom of Information

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Ludwig asked:

- 1) Do FOI officers ever receive or respond to applicants from their individual email account as opposed to from a central account?
 - a. If so, how does the officer distinguish between communication related to their task as a decision maker and their primary work task?
- 2) How do FOI decision makers that receive emails related to FOI decisions in their normal work capacity distinguish these emails from FOI decision emails?

Answer:

- 1) The Department maintains a Freedom of Information (FOI) email account where the majority of FOI correspondence is directed. FOI officers occasionally receive emails and respond to applicants from their individual (DSS) email account instead of the Department's central FOI email account.

In performing the role of a decision-maker, an officer will draft a formal decision letter or in some cases a decision email when making a final decision on a request. It is clear from the terms of the letter or email that the record contains an FOI decision.

- 2) All FOI requests received are assigned a unique identifier which is included in all correspondence from the Department to the applicant and consulted third parties. The inclusion of the unique identifier in the subject line or body of the email enables FOI officers to determine whether an email is FOI related.