

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Social Services Portfolio
2014-15 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: Cross Outcome - Across Programs

Question No: 864

Topic: Freedom of Information - Consultations with other Departments, Agencies and the Minister

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Ludwig asked:

1. Other than for the purpose of discussing a transfer under section 16 of the Act, does the Department consult or inform other Departments or Agencies when it receives Freedom of Information requests?
2. If so, for each instance provide a table setting out the following information:
 - a. The Department or Agency which was consulted;
 - b. The document;
 - c. The purpose of the consultation;
 - d. Whether an extension of time was sought from the applicant to allow time for the consultation, including whether it was granted and the length of the extension;
 - e. Whether an extension of time was sought from the Information Commissioner to allow time for the consultation, including whether it was granted and the length of the extension.

Answer:

1. In accordance with the Guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) and the Better Practice Guide issued by the Attorney-General's Department, other departments or agencies will be consulted if the request covers documents prepared, or provided by, that agency.

Some departments will also be consulted or informed where a particular exemption is being considered in relation to an FOI request. For example, in relation to potential exemption claims under section 34 of the FOI Act (the Cabinet documents exemption), the Department will consult with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

2. The Department does not maintain statistics to enable responses to part a), b) or c) without unreasonable diversion of resources.
 - d) The Department does not seek extensions of time for the purposes of consulting with other departments or agencies.
 - e) N/A.