

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Additional Estimates Hearings February 2015**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australia Post**

**Question No: 13**

**Program No. Australia Post**

**Hansard Ref: Page 24-25, 24/2/2015**

**Topic: QoNs from Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014**

**Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:**

**Senator URQUHART:** I want to ask you about the questions on notice from the previous estimates. From about 9.58 this morning, a couple of hours ago, I have been continually getting emails with questions on notice that have been provided. But at about 9.58 there were about 50 questions on notice outstanding from the estimates last November. You are obviously aware that estimates is an accountability process. Under the standing orders the questions were actually due on 9 January. Why have they been delayed?

**Mr Fahour:** The questions on notice?

**Senator URQUHART:** Yes, from November.

**Mr Fahour:** I will need to come back to you on notice, and I will have to do it in a timely way...

**Mr Fahour:** ...I do not have a satisfactory answer for you now. I can assure you, without doing any buck-passing to anybody, that Australia Post takes them very seriously and we respond fairly quickly, but we have to go through a process.

**Senator URQUHART:** What is that process?

**Mr Fahour:** Normally the process of any agency is that you submit them to the department, and you get the feedback.

**Senator URQUHART:** Have the questions that you were asked in November been submitted to the department?

**Mr Fahour:** Absolutely.

**Senator URQUHART:** So Australia Post has provided them to the department?

**Mr Fahour:** What I can say is we take responsibility for where we are. We take it very seriously. I will give you in writing a response of where the bottleneck to those responses is. I would add—and I know you are fully aware of this—that the number of questions that came out of the last estimates totalled 89, but there were a whole bunch of subquestions. Of those 89, one of them had 40 subquestions, and of those 40 subquestions there were a further (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) questions. When I added up each of the questions, they went into the hundreds. This is not an excuse in any shape or form, because we take this incredibly seriously. But over the last six months we have been under enormous pressure as an organisation to deal with all sorts of issues. This is something we have resources allocated to, but I do not have a department or an office big enough to get through the amount of questions that we had. Right now, with the overhead cost reduction that we have been doing, and reducing costs everywhere, things are taking a little bit longer. However, I promise you that we are taking it seriously. I ask your indulgence a little bit.

**Senator URQUHART:** Given that they were due on 9 January and we are almost at the end of February, I think there has been a reasonable amount of indulgence. The question is: has Australia Post answered the questions and forward them to the department? Is that where the bottleneck is?

**Mr Fahour:** I am not going to blame anybody. **Senator URQUHART:** I am not asking you to blame anyone. I am just asking you a question. Has Australia Post forwarded the questions? That is the question.

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**Mr Fahour:** Yes, we have.

**Answer:**

The final index of Questions on Notice from the November hearing was confirmed by the Committee and forwarded to Australia Post on 16 December 2014.

Australia Post provided draft responses to the Department in batches between 19 December 2014 and 11 February 2015. Further clarification from Australia Post on some draft responses was sought by the Department on 13 February 2015, to which final responses were provided to the Department on 16 February 2015.

Departmental cleared responses were provided to the Minister's Office between 11 February and 20 February 2015.

All responses were lodged with the Committee between 13 February and 24 February 2015.