

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

nbm

Question No: 206(f)

nbm

Hansard Ref: Written, 19/02/2016

Topic: Legal Costs

Senator Ludwig, Joe asked:

Since the change of Prime Minister on 14 September, 2015:

1. List all legal costs incurred by the department or agency
2. List the total cost for these items, broken down by source of legal advice, hours retained or taken to prepare the advice and the level of counsel used in preparing the advice, whether the advice was internal or external
3. List cost spend briefing Counsel, broken down by hours spent briefing, whether it was direct or indirect briefing, the gender ratio of Counsel, how each Counsel was engaged (departmental, ministerial)
4. How was each piece of advice procured? Detail the method of identifying legal advice

Answer:

1. For the period (inclusive) from 14 September 2015 to 31 January 2016 the total fees paid to external law firms for all legal and regulatory support services by nbm was \$8,694,204.
2. nbm has a competitive panel arrangement in place, which was fully re-tendered in mid-2014. However, nbm does from time to time go off panel for specialist advice where necessary. To provide the total fees on a per hour, level of counsel and gender basis etc is likely to be in breach of our confidentiality obligations with each firm and to provide this information would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.
3. See answer 2.
4. nbm has a competitive panel arrangement in place and allocates external legal work based on an External Law Firm Briefing Policy that includes subject matter expertise and achieving value for money in each case.