

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Additional Estimates Hearings May 2014**

**Communications Portfolio**

**NBN Co Limited**

**Question No: 296**

**Program No. NBN Co Limited**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Legal Costs**

**Senator Ludwig asked:**

List all legal costs incurred by the Department/Agency since 25 February 2014

1. 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
2. List cost spend briefing Counsel, broken down by hours spend briefing, whether it was direct or indirect briefing, the gender ratio of Counsel, how each Counsel was engaged (Departmental, Ministerial)
3. How was each piece of advice procured? Detail the method of identifying legal advice

**Answer:**

1. For the three month period (inclusive) from 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 the total fees paid to external law firms for all legal and regulatory support services by NBN Co was \$5,421,673.
2. NBN Co has a competitive panel arrangement in place and has retained Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Allens Linklaters, Clayton Utz and Ashurst as its panel external legal advisors. However, NBN Co does from time to time go off panel for specialist advice where necessary. To provide the total fees on a per hour, gender ratio and level of counsel basis is likely to be in breach of our confidentiality obligations with each firm and further, to provide this information would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.
3. NBN Co 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.