

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 246
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Programme: Policy and Communications Division
Topic: Portfolio wide – Freedom of Information - consultation
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 26 May 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Ludwig asked:

Other than for the purposes of discussing a transfer under section 16 of the Act, has the Department consulted or informed the Minister's office about Freedom of Information requests it has received for the period 24 February 2014 to 26 May 2014? If yes, provide a table setting out the following information:

- a) The requests with respect to which the Minister or Ministerial office was consulted;
- b) The Minister or Ministerial office which was consulted;
- 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;
- f) 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
- g) Whether any briefings (including formal briefs, email briefings and verbal briefings) were provided to the Minister's office

Answer:

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, National Water Commission, Murray Darling Basin Authority, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Climate Change Authority did not consult or inform the Minister's office about an FOI request received between 24 February 2014 and 26 May 2014.

The following tables outline the responses from the Department and other Portfolio Agencies.

Department of the Environment					
Requests to which Minister or Ministerial office was consulted	Minister consulted	The purpose of the consultation	Extension of time sought from applicant	Extension of time sought from the Information Commissioner	Briefings provided to the Minister's office
FOI 040514 - List of business people and private citizens who accompanied the Minister on official trips.	Minister for the Environment	Ascertain if any document existed within the scope of the request.	No	No	Email advice on scope of FOI request and processing requirements.
FOI 010514 – Information related to IT support for Minister's Office.					
FOI 080414 - Meetings between Minister and specific Energy Companies.					
FOI 070414 - Correspondence to and from the Minister's Office.					

FOI 010314 – Correspondence from the Independent Expert Scientific Committee to the Minister.	Minister for the Environment	Ascertain if any document existed within the scope of the request.	Not for this purpose. Extension of time applied under provision of FOI Act for consulting third parties external to the Commonwealth.	No	Email advice on scope of FOI request and processing requirements.
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<i>Clean Energy Regulator</i>					
Requests to which Minister or Ministerial office was consulted	Minister consulted	The purpose of the consultation	Extension of time sought from applicant	Extension of time sought from the Information Commissioner	Briefings provided to the Minister's office
FOI requests related to debt recovery action.	Minister for the Environment	The consultation occurred after the FOI decision and release of documents had occurred, and was in response to media reports referring to the released documents.	No	No	A verbal briefing was provided to the Minister's office.

Bureau of Meteorology					
Requests to which Minister or Ministerial office was consulted	Minister consulted	The purpose of the consultation	Extension of time sought from applicant	Extension of time sought from the Information Commissioner	Briefings provided to the Minister's office
Various	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment	The Bureau routinely informs the Parliamentary Secretary's Office of decisions once the decision has been finalised prior to release to applicant or publication via the FOI Disclosure Log. Further, specific discussions on FOI matters may occur once the decision has been taken by the delegate. These discussions are generally in response to media inquiries that may be generated by the information released under FOI.	No	No	No