

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

2015 - 2016

Department/Agency: Australian Taxation Office

Question: AET 2666-2671

Topic: Procedure Manuals - Departmental

Reference: written - 19 February 2016

Senator: Ludwig, Joe

Question:

2666. Does the department have a procedure manual for communication between the department and the minister? If yes, please provide a copy and:
2667. When was the manual last updated?
2668. Who is responsible for updating the manual?
2669. Has the minister's office had any input into the content of the manual? If so, please detail.
2670. Who is the manual distributed to?
2671. Is anyone responsible for clearing communications before they are sent to the minister or the minister's office?

Answer:

2666. Yes. CEI 2014/03/02 – Providing services to Treasury Portfolio Ministers and Parliament. Refer to attachment.
2667. 7 September 2015.
2668. Senior Director Parliamentary Services.
2669. No.
2670. It is available to all staff on the ATO intranet.
2671. Depending on the complexity and sensitivity of the communication, subject matter experts at SES1, SES2 level clear communication before it's sent to the Minister or Minister's Office.
There are circumstances where a Second Commissioner or the Commissioner clears the Communication.



Providing Services to Treasury Portfolio Ministers and Parliament - CEI 2014/03/02

Services to Ministers and Parliament Guideline

This guideline outlines the requirements for Providing Services to Treasury Portfolio Ministers and Parliament

1. What is this Guideline about?

This guideline sets out the requirements and lists the types of advice the ATO provides to Treasury Portfolio Ministers and Parliament.

2. What are the ATO's aims in providing advice to Parliament?

The ATO is committed to:

- Providing proactive, timely, high-quality and transparent advice to Treasury Portfolio Ministers and Parliament
- Keeping the Government informed of issues that relate to the tax and superannuation systems in order to make informed comments and decisions about them where appropriate.

3. What are your responsibilities?

When providing advice to Treasury Portfolio Ministers, you need to ensure you:

- Identify and advise the Parliamentary Services team of relevant issues, including the likelihood of media interest or potential lobbying of government. If you are unsure about an issue's importance, consult Parliamentary Services
- Respond to requests for information promptly and meet deadlines. If you are unable to meet a timeframe advise Parliamentary Services
- Be open and transparent and provide information that is accurate and of high quality
- Obtain relevant approvals. For approval requirements, contact Parliamentary Services
- When drafting and providing ministerial correspondence, ministerial submissions and briefs, question time briefs or questions on notice you need to ensure the following is applied.

Ministerial correspondence

Ministerial correspondence is correspondence from Members of Parliament or taxpayers that is referred to Treasury Portfolio Ministers in relation to the administration of tax and superannuation laws.

- Use the ministerial correspondence template provided by Parliamentary Services, in the Parliamentary Document Management System (PDMS).
- Consider whether secrecy provisions and approvals apply in relation to disclosure to Ministers of information about the affairs of taxpayers. Refer to the [Secrecy and Privacy policy](#) and [Information Disclosure policy](#).
- The prepared response letter is returned to Ministers Offices via PDMS.

Ministerial submissions and briefs

Ministerial submissions (previously known as 'minutes') and briefs inform Ministers of significant issues, recommend action or seek a decision.

- Use formatting and templates specified by Parliamentary Services.
- Note that the ATO view on matters of policy and law design is provided to Treasury using separate formal minute processes administered by Integrated Tax Design. Refer to the [Working with Treasury](#).

Question time briefs

- Question time briefs provide Ministers with speaking points and background information to respond to questions in Parliament.
- Briefs must be timely, succinct, and use the template provided.

Questions on notice

Questions on notice allow Parliamentarians to ask questions on administrative matters relating to government agencies.

- Answer the specific question only, clearly addressing the issue from the Minister's perspective.
- Prepare written responses for questions on notice as if it is a continuation of the evidence.
- Include only non-classified information. Questions on notice are tabled and published to the Australian Parliament House website. If a question seeks taxpayer-specific information, consult Parliamentary Services.

Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary Committees scrutinise government activity, such as legislation, policy or administration. They may also oversee expenditure of public money.

- Provide information about tax and superannuation systems without commenting on policy. Policy matters are for Treasury.
- Manage the enquiry without referring to taxpayer information. If pressed and where possible, this information should be provided in private (or in camera), such as a committee meeting or hearing not open to the public.

4. Specialist roles and responsibilities

Parliamentary Services team, Public Affairs branch

- Manages the workflow between the ATO, Treasury Portfolio Ministers and Parliament.
- Facilitates the ATO's relationships with Ministers, their offices, and Parliament.
- Ensures the quality and timeliness of all types of advice from the ATO to Parliament.

Business Line Coordinators

- Manage parliamentary workflow in their business lines.
- Oversee quality assurance and timeliness of advice.
- Advise and support ATO staff.
- Manage parliamentary phone lines.
- Help prepare material for all correspondence and queries.

Departmental Liaison Officer

- Manages interactions between the Minister's office and the ATO.
- Advises the Minister on ATO matters and the ATO on Minister's office matters.
- Helps manage the legislative program in the Minister's office.

- Identifies and obtains advice on issues the Minister needs to know about.
- Is located in the Assistant Treasurer's office.

5. Who is covered by this guideline?

This policy applies to all ATO employees including contractors and others working in any capacity in the ATO.

6. What is not covered by this guideline?

For advice to Treasury, refer to [Providing advice to Treasury](#).

7. More information

For more information about this guideline contact [Parliamentary Services](#).

For information on advice to Treasury, contact [Integrated Tax Design](#).

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