

## Senate Committee: Education and Employment

### QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015

#### Outcome: Skills and Training

#### Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000124

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

#### *VET Advisory Board*

#### Question

"Minister McFarlane announced the new VET Advisory Board on 15 August 2014. In the Schedule of Documents supplied to Hon Sharon Bird MP under the Freedom of Information Act, a number of documents have been withheld in full or part:

- Brief on establishment of an Industry Skills Advisory Board (15 April 2014)
- Email dated 3 July 2014 regarding the approval of the advisory board
- Email dated 15 July 2014 – Draft Advisory Board brief
- Email dated 16 July 2014 – Prime Ministerial approval of advisory board
- Brief on Vocational Education and Training Advisory Board Member Letters (18 July 2014)

1. Can the Department advise why these documents were not released?
2. What was the process for deciding who was to be Chair and why was John Hart chosen for the position?
3. In seeking approval of the appointment, was the Minister or the Prime Minister advised that John Hart was also the Chair of the North Sydney Forum – a fund-raising body attached to the Liberal Party federal electoral conference in the Treasurer's seat of North Sydney? This detail does not seem to appear in any of the documents released under Freedom of Information.
4. If yes, was information contained in a written briefing to the Prime Minister and Minister?
5. What was the nature of this briefing? Why was this not supplied under the release of information under Ms Bird's request under Freedom of Information Act."

#### Answer

1. The Department of Industry undertook a review of all documents held by the department that were relevant to the request by the Hon Sharon Bird MP. The department identified 7 documents in its possession consisting of 72 folios relevant to Ms Bird's request. In December 2014, the department's delegate, Ms Peta Furnell, released one document in full; and six documents in part, redacting material in these documents in accordance with the FOI Act 1982, on the grounds that these documents contain material that is exempt under sections 34(3) - Cabinet documents, and/or 47C(1) - Deliberative processes, and/or 47F(1) – personal information.

2. Minister Macfarlane established the VET Advisory Board as a small body to ensure that industry has a stronger voice in the VET system during early stages of the VET reform process. The Chair, Mr John Hart, and Board Members were selected by the Minister based on their capacity to provide advice to Minister Macfarlane on issues relating to skills and training, spanning a range of VET and industry sectors. Each member of the Board brings experience from across industry and the VET sector, from training package development to using new technologies to better link students to employment.

3. The department did not provide information regarding the North Sydney Forum. The department provided details of relevant skills and training experience of candidates for the Board.

4. N/A

5. N/A