

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Outcome/Program:** Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Topic:** Parliamentary Sitting Calendar

**Senator:** Kakoschke-Moore, Skye

**Question reference number:** 13

**Type of question:** FPA Monday 27 February 2017, page 55

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 13 April 2017

**Number of pages:** 2.

**Question:**

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Specifically in my mind I am thinking of the consideration of cross-portfolio Indigenous matters, which generally over the past few years have been held on a Friday in additional and supplementary estimates. ... But something that I have noticed that is of concern to me is the fact that on the official sitting calendar, the Fridays following additional estimates weeks and supplementary estimates weeks are blank, and so it appears there is no consideration of anything in estimates that day, let alone matters as significant as those affecting Indigenous Australians and spending concerning them. I am curious to know that why is. Why is it not included on the official sitting calendar for the Senate?

Senator Brandis: I do not know the answer to that question. I do not know who puts that calendar together. I do not think it is PM&C, is it?

Ms E Kelly: Mr Rush.

Senator Brandis: Mr Rush? Somebody knows; I do not.

Mr Rush: I am afraid I may not know the answer to that question. The department certainly assists in putting together the published calendar, but the construction of the calendar is coordinated by the Prime Minister's office in collaboration with the chambers, and in particular the leaders and managers of business in both chambers. I do not know the answer to the specific question about Fridays. We have to take that on notice.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Thank you for your advice. From here on, should I be speaking perhaps with the President of the Senate and the manager of government business so that we can look to rectify this? It does seem to me that it is quite a gap.

Senator Brandis: Yes, I think that would be quite fruitful. Ultimately, the President of the Senate is responsible for the business of the Senate, and that includes the sitting program. In a functional sense, I think the manager of government business is, as I said a moment ago, the person with the primary responsibility. There is certainly no reason why that Friday should not be marked in the calendar as an estimates day. Perhaps when the custom of the cross-portfolio Indigenous estimates was introduced some years ago, those who prepare the calendar did not turn their mind to the question, but I am glad you have.

**Answer:**

The parliamentary sitting pattern, as published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) website, was amended on 6 March 2017 to reflect the Senate's decision to hold Indigenous cross-portfolio Estimates hearings on 3 March, 26 May and 27 October 2017. Future sitting patterns published on the PM&C website will include Estimates hearings being held on the Fridays of Additional Estimates, Budget Estimates and Supplementary Budget Estimates periods where these hearings have been agreed to by the Senate.