

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: Government Waste

Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question reference number: 193

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Given that government and opposition politicians have all raised concerns over time and had policies on government waste:

- a. Is there a departmental definition on the meaning of 'waste', and if so, what is that definition?
- b. What are the Department's arrangements for monitoring and managing waste?
- c. Is there a central Departmental mechanism (e.g. phone number, email address, web site) for public servants or contractors to report Departmental waste?
- d. How much waste was identified by the Department in FY 13/14, FY 14/15 and FY 15/16?
- e. Can Departmental officers or contractors report waste anonymously?
- f. Are they afforded a protection if they do so?

Answer:

(a.-b.) The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) complies with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act) which requires the Secretary to govern PM&C in a way that promotes, amongst other things, the proper use and management of public resources for which PM&C is responsible (see section 15). The PGPA Act does not use the concept of 'waste'. In the context of use or management of public resources, the PGPA Act defines 'proper' to mean 'efficient, effective, economical and ethical'. Instructions issued by the Secretary, such as the Secretary's Instruction 2.1 *Approving Commitment of Relevant Money and Entering into Arrangements*, embed that rule in PM&C's arrangements for complying with the PGPA Act.

(c) Current and former PM&C employees and contracted service providers can make reports of 'disclosable conduct' to authorised persons in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*. Under that Act, 'disclosable conduct' includes conduct that results in the wastage of money or property. To facilitate disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, PM&C publishes the names of authorised officers and an email address on its

intranet and external website (as well as a telephone number and postal address on the external website).

(d) The PGPA Act does not use the concept of 'waste', and so therefore a line item split of 'waste' is not available.

(e) Current and former PM&C employees and contracted service providers can make anonymous disclosures about wastage of money or property under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

(f) Yes. The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides protections for complying reports which includes immunity from civil, criminal or administrative liability, and protection from any contractual remedy, for making a public interest disclosure.