

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2015-16**

Finance Portfolio  
27-28 May 2015

**Department/Agency:** Department of Finance

**Outcome/Program:** 3/3.1

**Topic:** 'Tax White Paper' unit - corresponding ratio to Opposition staffing

**Senator:** Gallagher

**Question reference number:** F67

**Type of question:** Hansard, F&PA Committee, Page 78, 28 May 2015

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** Friday, 10 July 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

**Senator GALLAGHER:** So Mr Hockey has been given five extra staff to work specifically in the tax white paper unit?

Will that flow on to the opposition staff? Is there a ratio that if the government increases its staff numbers by five there is an acknowledgement that the opposition should have a commensurate increase in its staff numbers?

**Senator Ronaldson:** I will take that on notice.

...

**Senator GALLAGHER:** So that should mean there should be at least an extra staff member allocated to the opposition.

**Senator Ronaldson:** It is a good try, Senator. I said I would take it on notice and provide you with an answer. I am not going to pre-empt what the response will be.

**Senator GALLAGHER:** We look forward to you implementing the longstanding ratio.

**Senator Ronaldson:** I am not going to pre-empt what the response might be to your question, which I have taken on notice.

**Answer:**

The five positions allocated to the then Treasurer, the Hon Mr Joe Hockey MP, for the Tax White Paper Unit are separate to the Government's allocation for Ministerial staff. This is consistent with the practice of previous governments for positions allocated for special purposes such as task forces.

When these positions were allocated in February 2015, there were 14 unallocated positions within the Government's allocation of 420 personal employee positions. At 1 May 2015 there were 13 unallocated positions. If the five positions are counted as part of the Ministerial staff allocation, there would be no additional allocation to the Opposition as the total allocation remains within the 21 percent ratio.