

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013**

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Australian Public Service Commission

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1

**Topic:** Protocol for release of APS staffing data

**Senator:** Seselja

**Question reference number:** 155

**Type of question:** Hansard, FPA, Monday 18 November 2013, p.133

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 17 January 2014

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

Mr Sedgwick: The data will be published when the data is published, but I can certainly say to you that—

Senator Abetz: It is to be published on 2 December as I understand it. I am not sure what the protocol is regarding whether these figures are held until such time as the official statement.

Mr Sedgwick: What I can tell you is that there has been a further decline.

Senator SESELJA: Minister Abetz, perhaps you could check on that protocol.

Senator Abetz: Yes, I will.

**Answer:**

The APS staffing numbers for 30 June of each year are a key input into the Australian Public Service Commissioner's annual report on the state of the service (APS) given to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for presentation in Parliament. The preparation of the annual State of the Service report is a requirement under section 44 of the *Public Service Act 1999* and clause 3.5(2) of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions.

The protocol for the publishing the State of the Service Report for each financial year and the Australian Public Service (APS) staffing numbers for 30 June of each year are bound by the guidelines for the "Presentation of documents to the Parliament" approved on behalf of the Parliament by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit. Under the guidelines the documents prepared for tabling are confidential (under embargo) to the Government until they are presented to the parliament (part 2.3). These guidelines also provide advice on release prior to tabling (part 4.29) which recommends that 'every effort should be made to ensure the document is tabled in Parliament prior to, or to coincide with the public release of the report'. The guidelines also reference the *House of Representatives Practice 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* (page 612), which notes that the public release of a document before presentation to the parliament "has always been considered a matter of impropriety".

Agency annual reports are required to be tabled in Parliament by 31 October each year. However, in 2003 the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit agreed to extend the tabling deadline of the State of the Service component of the Commissioner's annual report by one calendar month after the tabling date for agencies' annual reports. In 2013, the report was required to be tabled by 2 December.