

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 18-22 November 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Opposition briefings outside of caretaker period

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

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Question:

Senator WONG: I had questions for Ms Croke in relation to an FOI determination. While we wait for her, can you tell me—perhaps on notice—outside of the caretaker period, what interactions between shadow ministers and departments are permitted?

Ms Cross: Outside of caretaker periods? I believe the normal process is to seek the agreement of the relevant minister if the shadow minister wishes to request a briefing. I think there is an arrangement where you can seek approval to do that.

Senator WONG: That was my understanding. Would it be the case, therefore, that a secretary, who had interactions with the then opposition or with the current opposition, would do so without informing his or her minister outside of the caretaker period?

Ms Cross: We will check for you what the arrangements are. My understanding was that there was a normal process.

Senator WONG: Thank you. I am still waiting for Ms Croke. I did give notice that I would be going to FOI. You will take the ex-caretaker provisions on notice?

Ms Cross: Yes.

Answer:

Outside of the caretaker and pre-election consultation period, requests for briefing from officials by the opposition would normally be made through the relevant Minister. The Minister may agree to the request and the Minister may set the scope of the briefing. This is consistent with past practice under successive Governments.