

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Group 1**

**Program 2.1**

**Question No. 12**

**Senator Macdonald asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February 2014:**

CHAIR: I have heard that, when the previous minister left, there were a series of parties thrown by various stakeholders. Do we have any details of them? Are there any costs that came back to the taxpayer as a result of those, or would I have to ask the individual agencies?

Senator Brandis: Mr Wilkins might know. I do not know about such parties. Were they parties celebrating the departure of the former government? Or were they nice farewell functions for the outgoing minister?

CHAIR: I suspect the latter, from what I have heard.

Senator Brandis: There were certainly, as you will well remember, parties the length and breadth of the land to celebrate the departure of the former government.

CHAIR: But they were not paid for by the taxpayer.

Senator Brandis: No.

CHAIR: Or not by the corporate taxpayer. Mr Wilkins, is it possible to get that sort of information? I hear that there were a number of parties across Australia where quite considerable money was spent by members of some of the arts communities in wining and dining the former minister. That is fine—if he has done a good job and they were appreciative, that is great. I am just interested in whether there were such parties that were a cost to the budget. If there were parties and there was no cost to the budget, it is of no interest to me whatsoever. But I would be interested if you have that information or, if not, if you could take it on notice.

Mr Wilkins: As you would appreciate, I was not in charge of the arts at that point in time, so I have no knowledge of that directly at all and at this stage I do not have any indirect knowledge. So I think it is probably better if I take your question on notice.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

There were no farewell functions or events organised by the department or funded by the tax payer for former Ministers.

The former Minister for the Arts and Parliamentary Secretary held a series of stakeholder engagement functions in March, April and May 2013. The total cost of these functions was \$54,312.69.