

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

Program: 1.8 Australian Government Disaster Financial Support Payments

Question No. BE16/018

Senator Cameron asked the following question at the hearing on 5 May 2016:

Senator CAMERON: Mr Crosweller, I understand that what we have is over \$1 billion payment in Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, which were in the midyear economic update and are now not in the budget—is that correct? This is for Queensland.

Mr Crosweller: That is correct.

Senator CAMERON: From what I read, the issue is, apparently, that there were some problems with the process of claims and the ANAO delivered the report—is that correct?

Mr Crosweller: That is correct.

Senator CAMERON: Queensland is not receiving its payment of over \$1 billion—is that correct?

Mr Crosweller: Not this financial year, no.

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Senator CAMERON: At what level of government was the decision made to defer the funds?

Mr Crosweller: It is part of the budget process.

Senator CAMERON: Why would an issue of disaster relief be part of the budget process?

Mr Crosweller: In essence, as I understand it, because it is a contingent liability and needs to be considered in that context of the broader budget implications of contingent liabilities, it forms part of the overall budget process.

Senator CAMERON: What group was dealing with it? Was it the finance minister or the Attorney-General?

Mr Crosweller: As I understand it, it was the ERC.

Senator CAMERON: I do not ask what advice you provided, but did you provide advice to the ERC on this issue?

Mr Crosweller: We provided advice to Treasury.

Senator CAMERON: When was that advice supplied?

Mr Crosweller: It would have been after the estimates and the claims were received from the states. I think it was in March, but I would have to take it on notice.

REPEATED QUESTION:

Senator CAMERON: Okay. I am back to the Queensland disaster recovery. Just let me reprise where we were up to. I think you advised that there was an ANAO report in March 2015?

Mr Crosweller: April, Senator.

Senator CAMERON: April 2015?

Mr Crosweller: That is correct.

Senator CAMERON: So then we had MYEFO in December—nine months later.

Mr Crosweller: That is correct.

Senator CAMERON: You indicated you had provided some advice to Treasury. Is that correct?

Mr Crosweller: That is correct, Senator.

Senator CAMERON: When did you provide that advice to Treasury?

Mr Crosweller: I think I mentioned that I would have to take the specific date on notice. But we provide advice to Treasury in anticipation of MYEFO, based on forward estimates, and then we provide further advice to Treasury once we have received claims for expenditure from states and territories. Those claims can come in as early as January, but they must come in by the end of March, unless they seek an extension of time.

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

The department provided advice to the Department of the Treasury on 15 April 2016.