

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

**Program:** 1.8 Australian Government Disaster Financial Support Payments

**Question No. BE16/023**

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

Senator CAMERON: Mr Crossweller, are you aware that any claims Queensland have made and lodged in March have historically always been paid very quickly?

Mr Crossweller: We were criticised by the ANAO for paying prior to assurance of acquittal. It was one of the key findings of the ANAO—that the government of the day was paying on expenditure prior to acquittal.

Senator CAMERON: But after the ANAO report came out—and that came out in April—payments were made—

Mr Crossweller: No. As I understand it—

Senator CAMERON: The ANAO report was 30 April.

Mr Crossweller: If I can confer with my colleagues—my understanding is that when the secretary wrote to states and territories, that we ceased all payments and we moved to a collaborative assurance framework, in order to move to assurance and acquittal—

Senator CAMERON: Is that your understanding, or do you know for sure?

Mr Crossweller: Specifically, I would have to take it on notice. I am not aware of a payment that was made after the secretary's letter. In fact, I am almost positive.

Senator CAMERON: I am told that after the ANAO report came out in April—it came out on 30 April, report No. 34—Queensland did receive payments. They did receive payments. They received them in the June, and that has been, historically, the position. They lodge the claim in the March. The claim gets paid in the June. That has historically been the position, because these are complex issues under the current—do you agree there are complex reconciliations happening?

Mr Crossweller: Yes, absolutely. Yes they are.

Senator CAMERON: So, they are complex reconciliations. Despite what Senator Brandis indicated, these are formal processes that have to be undertaken. They take a while. Normally, they are lodged in the March and paid in the June. That is the historical position.

Mr Crossweller: Advance payments have been made in the past. It was the very thing the ANAO was critical of, because the payments were being made prior to assurance and acquittal.

Ineligible expenditure was found, as well as a number of other concerning issues.

Senator CAMERON: Well, why did you pay them in June 2015?

Mr Crossweller: I am not saying we did. I would have to take that on notice. I am not aware of—

Senator CAMERON: I am saying that—

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

Following budget considerations, the Government agreed to make a partial payment in the form of an advance to the Queensland Government on 20 April 2015. The advance payment was made on 30 June 2015.