

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 48

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** File notes

**Proof Hansard page:** 7-8 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** Dr Grimes, have you collated your file notes in relation to any correspondence between you, any of your officers and Minister Joyce and his office in relation to this issue?

**Dr Grimes:** I have not collated the documents in the way that you describe. Obviously, I maintain some documents but I have not collated them in the way that you describe.

**Senator CAMERON:** Do you have documents here in relation to your engagement with Minister Joyce's office on this?

**Dr Grimes:** I have some documents—whether they are appropriate for tabling would need to be properly considered.

**Senator CAMERON:** Could you take on notice the tabling of all your file notes in relation to correspondence between you, any of your officers, Minister Joyce or any of his staff in relation to the *Hansard* issue.

**Dr Grimes:** I would have to take that on notice.

**Senator CAMERON:** I am talking about the changes to *Hansard* as a different aspect to freedom of information even though they are related.

**Dr Grimes:** Yes, I understand that and will have to take that on notice.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** I just want to understand what is being requested. What are file notes? Do you know what Senator Cameron is talking about?

**Dr Grimes:** I will review the question and then ensure that we check to see whether there are any documents that are within the scope of the question.

**CHAIR:** You do not have a little black notebook you make file notes in, don't you?

**Dr Grimes:** I take notes in a variety of ways. I understand the senator's question—

**CHAIR:** You don't have a little black notebook?

**Question:** 48 (continued)

**Dr Grimes:** I have got various notebooks. I understand the question that has been asked and we will review the—

**CHAIR:** Can you also include in that, Dr Grimes, any conversations you may have had with any members of parliament on this issue, if you have file notes? Have you spoken to Senator Cameron or Senator Siewert or me?

**Senator CAMERON:** I can tell you he has not.

**Dr Grimes:** No, I have not. My only conversation was with you.

**Answer:**

A number of discussions took place between Dr Grimes and senior departmental officers, and between senior departmental officers and staff from the Minister's Office, during the period 20 October to 27 October 2014 in relation to the information provided by the Minister to the House of Representatives on 20 October 2014. One discussion was held between the department and the Minister during this period. This discussion was between Dr Grimes and the Minister on 27 October 2014.

The discussions are outlined in the chronology provided at Attachment A.

File notes of relevant interactions are provided at Attachment B.

QoN48Attachment A - Chronology

Monday 20 October (2.32pm)	During Question Time, Minister Joyce answers a question in parliament about the number of farmers in receipt of drought assistance. <i>(Hansard refers)</i>
Monday 20 October (6.37pm)	Assistant Secretary, Drought Policy and Reform Branch, speaks with a Senior Advisor in the Minister's Office about statements made by the Minister in his response during that afternoon's Question Time.
Monday 20 October (6.39pm)	The Senior Advisor in the Minister's Office forwards to Assistant Secretary, Drought Policy and Reform Branch, an email exchange between himself and another advisor in the Minister's office about Hansard amendments. <i>(email refers – attachment 1)</i>
Wednesday 22 October (6.39pm)	Minister Joyce makes a statement to the House of Representatives providing additional information in relation to Farm Household Allowance. <i>(Hansard refers)</i>
Wednesday 22 October (6.58pm)	The Chief of Staff to Minister Joyce emails Acting First Assistant Secretary, Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division, and Assistant Secretary, Drought Policy and Reform Branch, advising that the Minister has provided additional information to the House of Representatives in relation to Farm Household Allowance. <i>(email refers – attachment 2)</i>
Wednesday 22 October (~7pm)	Acting First Assistant Secretary, Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division, and Assistant Secretary, Drought Policy and Reform Branch, have a meeting with Secretary Grimes at which the Hansard amendments are discussed.  As a result of this meeting, a number of discussions are held between Secretary Grimes and senior departmental officers including Deputy Secretary Tucker, Assistant Secretary, Governance, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division and Assistant Secretary, Drought Policy and Reform Branch.
Wednesday 22 October (~7.30pm)	At the request of Secretary Grimes, Deputy Secretary Tucker calls the Chief of Staff to Minister Joyce to discuss the Hansard amendments. <i>(email refers – attachment 3)</i>
Wednesday 22 October (~8.15pm)	The Chief of Staff to Minister Joyce calls Acting First Assistant Secretary, Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division, and Assistant Secretary, Drought Policy and Reform Branch, about the department's concerns regarding the Minister's statement in parliament and the Hansard amendments. The departmental officers confirm that the department had been sent a copy of an email exchange between advisors in the Minister's office on Monday evening (20 October) about Hansard amendments. The Chief of Staff advises that she is now dealing with the matter at her level within the Minister's office.
Thursday 23 October (~10.30am)	At the request of Deputy Secretary Tucker, acting on a request from Secretary Grimes, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division, calls the Senior Advisor in the Minister's Office to ask if the office intends to take further action on the Hansard amendments. The Senior Advisor advises there is no intention to make further statements at that time.
Friday 24 October (pm)	At the request of Secretary Grimes, Assistant Secretary, Governance, calls the Chief of Staff to Minister Joyce to discuss the Hansard amendments. <i>(email refers – attachment 4)</i>
Monday 27 October (~12.30pm)	Secretary Grimes meets with Minister Joyce to raise concerns about the changes to Hansard, recommending that the Hansard be formally corrected. <i>(file note refers – attachment 5)</i>
Monday 27 October (~4pm)	Minister Joyce provides information to the House of Representatives advising he had requested reversal of the amendments to Hansard. <i>(Hansard refers)</i>

## Kennedy, Cassandra

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**From:** Croker, Craig  
**Sent:** Monday, 20 October 2014 6:39 PM  
**To:** Kennedy, Cassandra  
**Subject:** FW: Today's Questions [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Categories:** AS meeting

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**From:** Croker, Craig  
**Sent:** Monday, 20 October 2014 6:34 PM  
**To:** Henderson, Andrew  
**Subject:** RE: Today's Questions [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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**From:** Henderson, Andrew  
**Sent:** Monday, 20 October 2014 6:20 PM  
**To:** Croker, Craig  
**Subject:** RE: Today's Questions [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi mate we are on a strict timeframe to get corrections back and accepted, can you take a look over this for me?  
Corrections I have made are in Red:

Thanks,

Andrew

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Drought

**Mr FITZGIBBON** (Hunter) (14:32): My question is also to the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, it is now eight months since you announced with some fanfare your drought assistance package for farmers. How much has the government actually paid in doubt assistance to farming families and how many farming families have benefited from that drought assistance?

**Mr JOYCE** (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (14:32): I thank the member for Hunter for his question. He would be happy to know that **Nearly** 4,000 applications have been approved for the farm household allowance. This is a substantial amount of money. This means that they are receiving between \$900 and \$1,000 a fortnight. We have actually changed conditions so that we can bring dignity back into these people's lives. We have actually made it happen. You would be happy to know, Madam Speaker, that we approved \$280 million in our drought package and concessional rates of four per cent. We have put money on the table—over \$22 million for other water infrastructure. These are the sorts of real outcomes that we are providing.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr JOYCE:** You would be happy to know that if we had gone with your conditions they would have got hardly anything. It was under your conditions—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister for Agriculture will resume his seat. The member for Hunter on a point of order.

**Mr Fitzgibbon:** I rise on a point of order on relevance. It was a pretty specific question: how much has been paid and how many families have benefited? To put it into context, it would help if the minister told us how many farming families have applied.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister is being relevant to the question. You asked how many had been assisted and about the drought. The Minister for Agriculture has the call.

**Mr JOYCE:** Madam Speaker, I cannot be much more relevant than actually giving the numbers. If he does not accept the numbers, what does he want to accept? I know you are bit light on in that side—

*Dr Chalmers interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Rankin has been warned; once more and you will leave.

**Mr JOYCE:** on the numbers department, but I have told you: nearly 4,000 have received the farm household allowance. Once they apply for it, it is approved and they receive it until it is knocked out.

**Mr Fitzgibbon:** I rise on a point of order.

**Mr JOYCE:** Straight away, you clown.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister will resume his seat and withdraw that last comment.

**Mr JOYCE:** I withdraw.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hunter on a point of order other than relevance.

**Mr Fitzgibbon:** I did not ask about farm household allowance. We will pursue that in estimates, the minister can be assured about that. And I know he will not like the outcome of that.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume his seat.

**Mr Fitzgibbon:** He is still not answering the question, Madam Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** You had your point of order on the question of relevance and you know perfectly well you can only have one. The Minister for Agriculture has the call.

**Mr JOYCE:** I am happy to announce that when we arrived in government they had not signed up all of the states and territories, so we actually got the conditions in place for the concessional farm finance package, which they might have started but could never actually finish. We actually got those conditions in place so that we could start getting that money out. We actually approved \$280 million to add to that, so we got \$700 million of available finance. We actually changed the

conditions of the farm household allowance so that we could have a higher net asset test so more people could actually get access to the money. We are happy with the fact that nearly 4,000 applications have been through and if they were also a recipient of the Interim Farm household Allowance you actually get the money until the department decides that you are not allowed to get the money. So you keep on getting the money until such time as, on the application being assessed, they decide if you are not eligible for it. But it is not a case that you apply for the money and then you have to wait for your application to be approved unless it is a new application. You actually get the money straight away. So this is part of a process that is helping us look after the farmers that you left behind.



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**Grimes, Paul**

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**From:** Grimes, Paul  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 October 2014 9:03 AM  
**To:** Tucker, Mark  
**Subject:** RE: Discussion with the Chief of staff [DLM=Sensitive]

Thank you Mark. I have been advised that the wording differs because 'corrections' provided to Hansard by the Minister's Office on Monday evening did not accurately reflect what the Minister actually said — and this was the basis of my request on Wednesday evening that the Minister's Chief of Staff be immediately contacted and advised of our concern.

I would be grateful for further advice on our understanding about how this matter will be resolved (in particular, were any actions taken yesterday following your advice to the Chief of Staff that it appeared that Hansard had been incorrectly amended?)

Please advise if it is necessary for me to follow up with the Minister directly on this matter or if there are any material changes in our understanding of the situation.

Paul

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**From:** Tucker, Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, 23 October 2014 7:09 PM  
**To:** Grimes, Paul  
**Subject:** Discussion with the Chief of staff [DLM=Sensitive]

Secretary

I contacted Diana last night to advise her that the department was aware of the answers that the Minister had given in Parliament concerning the uptake and arrangements for Farm Household Allowance. I made sure that she understood that the department had seen the Minister's answers to the question and the subsequent recording on his response in Hansard where some of the wording differed. She was grateful that the department had highlighted the issue and undertook to consider further how they may handle the matter. Diana immediately spoke to the officers who had the detail and fully understood the importance of the issue. She advised that the office is considering further the action that may be required including taking into account the clarification from the Minister last night (see attached).

Mark Tucker  
Deputy Secretary

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## Grimes, Paul

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**From:** Cale, Lee  
**Sent:** Friday, 24 October 2014 6:03 PM  
**To:** Grimes, Paul  
**Cc:** Tucker, Mark  
**Subject:** Discussion with CoS re Hansard Matter [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Paul,

I have followed up with the Diana Hallam this afternoon regarding the Hansard matter. She has advised that the Minister has considered the matter and is confident that his statement to the House on this past Wednesday night has addressed any concerns of ambiguity on this matter.

Regards,  
Lee

Lee Cale PSM  
Assistant Secretary | Governance

Phone +61 2 6272 5162 | Mobile +61 417 258 197

Department of Agriculture  
18 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Please note that my email address has now changed to [lee.cale@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:lee.cale@agriculture.gov.au)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

File No.:

**NOTE FOR FILE – FARM HOUSEHOLD ALLOWANCE: HANSARD RECORD**

I met with the Minister earlier today following the 11.30am weekly departmental meeting with the Minister.

Among other matters, I raised my concerns around the incorrect changes that had been made to Hansard by the Minister's staff in response to a question without notice relating to Farm Household Allowance. I advised that I was raising the matter because I felt I had an obligation to ensure that the Minister was personally aware of my concerns around a misleading of the Parliament through an incorrect Hansard record. The Minister indicated that the original changes had occurred without his personal knowledge.

I advised the Minister of my recommendation that Hansard should be formally corrected.

The Minister noted my recommendation.



Paul Grimes  
Secretary

Executive

Date: 27/10/2014

## Willock, Anna

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**From:** Hallam, Diana  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 22 October 2014 6:58 PM  
**To:** Willock, Anna; Kennedy, Cassandra  
**Subject:** Explanation [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]  
**Attachments:** Explanation.docx

Hi Anna and Cass

The Minister has just given accurate Farm Household Allowance data to the House. This will be reflected in Hansard tomorrow.

Rgds

Diana

On indulgence I rise to add to an answer from question time.

I have the following additional information for the House.

- 4,957 applications have been received for Farm Household Allowance with 4,551 fully processed
- 4,098 applications have been approved for Farm Household Allowance to date with 4,011 recipients currently receiving payment
- According to estimates over 3,500 have transitioned from the Interim Farm Household Allowance payment.

Payments to farmers who had been in receipt of Interim Farm Household Allowance and had applied for Farm Household Allowance continued without interruption until their application had been assessed by Centrelink.

Further questions about Farm Household Allowance data should be directed to the Minister for Human Services.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 49

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Actions taken prior to change in Hansard

**Proof Hansard page:** 10 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** Dr Grimes, what actions did you take prior to the edits becoming public on Monday 27 October 2014?

**Dr Grimes:** I had discussions with officers in the department.

**Senator CAMERON:** Can you provide dates?

**Dr Grimes:** Yes. I think I have taken it on notice that I would be able to provide those.

**Senator CAMERON:** And the time, where you had those discussions and with whom you had the discussions.

**Senator Abetz:** And I am sure you do not need the actual names, just the officer—

**Senator CAMERON:** Yes, the officers. You indicate in your correspondence dated 2 March that you consider that without your intervention there was a great danger to the committee of being inadvertently misled. That was on the FOI issue.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 for a chronology of discussions between Dr Grimes and departmental officers.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 50

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Meeting with the Minister

**Proof Hansard page:** 11 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** What can you tell me, Dr Grimes, about the meeting with the minister, from your perspective?

**Dr Grimes:** Simply that I raised the issue with the minister. I think it is appropriate to take other matters on notice.

**Senator CAMERON:** We are not sure whether your officers actually saw the minister give the response. I would be surprised if anyone in your department did not monitor the minister on his feet in question time. Do you allocate officers?

**Senator Abetz:** That has been taken on notice.

**Dr Grimes:** That is correct; that has been taken on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to the meeting between Dr Grimes and the Minister on 27 October 2014.

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 75 in relation to monitoring of question time.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 51

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Correspondence between the department and the minister's office

**Proof Hansard page:** 11 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** You have said that you would take on notice any correspondence between your department and the minister's office or the minister in relation to this.

**Dr Grimes:** Yes.

**Senator CAMERON:** But do you have any knowledge of any discussions or correspondence between the 20th and the 22nd?

**Dr Grimes:** I only have broad knowledge of any discussions that had happened, and it would probably be appropriate to refer it to the relevant officers or take the matters on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to relevant discussions or correspondence between 20 and 22 October 2014.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 52

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Advice to the minister's office that the minister had made a mistake

**Proof Hansard page:** 12 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** So between the 22nd and the 27th you were aware of these 'discrepancies'. If you did not have discussions, were there active discussions between your department and the minister's office? First of all, who advised the minister's office that the minister had made a mistake?

**Senator Abetz:** That would be a matter I will have to take on notice to find out how the minister became aware of the error in what he said in his answer.

**Senator CAMERON:** I am asking the secretary whether any of his officers advised the minister's office of the problem with this initial answer.

**Senator Abetz:** Unless the *Hansard* is changed, you will find that your question was about the minister and the minister's office first becoming aware. You have now changed the question.

**Senator CAMERON:** I can ask any question like.

**Senator Abetz:** Of course you can. But I do not want the suggestion to be that your previous question was exactly the same as the one you have just asked.

**Senator CAMERON:** I am happy for you to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to the discussions between departmental officers and the staff in the minister's office on this matter.



**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 53

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Contact made by the department to the minister's office

**Proof Hansard page:** 12-13 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** I am just asking a different question. Dr Grimes, did anyone from your department contact the minister's office to advise that what the minister had put on the public record in question time on the 20th was incorrect?

**Dr Grimes:** There were discussions between the department and the office. I would have to take the rest on notice.

**Senator CAMERON:** When did those discussions first take place?

**Dr Grimes:** They took place over the period from the 22nd to 27th. We will have to take the details on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to the discussions between departmental officers and the staff in the minister's office on this matter.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 54

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Discussions between the minister's office and the department

**Proof Hansard page:** 16 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** Were there any discussions between the minister's office and the department prior to the *Hansard* being changed?

**Senator Abetz:** That has already been taken on notice. Dr Grimes, I think, was not aware, but he was willing to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to relevant discussions or correspondence between the minister's office and the department prior to Hansard being changed.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 55

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Discussions between the minister's office and the department

**Proof Hansard page:** 17 (5.03.2015)

**Senator STERLE asked:**

**Senator STERLE:** Just one other—I am just trying to work out, if I can, with Mr Grimes: you have clearly stated Mr Grimes that you met or had a conversation with the minister on the 27th around lunchtime, which I would assume was before question time—it is not hard to work that out. But Minister Joyce said on the 24th of February, Tuesday, that he had stated quite clearly—I will quote him; he said:

I have stated quite clearly I had no knowledge of the change and, once it did become known to me, I asked for it to be changed back.

On the 24th. But you said no-one had spoken—did you say no-one had spoken to him or you had not spoken to him until the 27th just before question time?

**Dr Grimes:** I spoke to him on the 27th.

**Senator STERLE:** So did any of your staff speak to Senator Joyce or his office before?

**Dr Grimes:** I have no knowledge.

**Senator CAMERON:** I think you have taken that on notice.

**Dr Grimes:** All of those matters have been taken on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to relevant discussions or correspondence between the minister's office and the department.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 56

**Division/Agency:** Executive

**Topic:** Details of the multiple actions taken

**Proof Hansard page:** 17-18 (5.03.2015)

**Senator CAMERON asked:**

**Senator CAMERON:** Dr Grimes, can I take you back to your letter of the 2nd March—I did ask you this earlier but you moved on a bit quickly—to the last paragraph on the first page. You said, 'This includes specific information relating to the original alterations made to *Hansard* and multiple actions I took personally at the time to seek rectification, including a personal meeting with the minister before the alterations became public.' What were those multiple actions?

**Dr Grimes:** We have covered those already.

**Senator CAMERON:** Just cover them again, because I am still not clear.

**Dr Grimes:** They have been covered already.

**Senator CAMERON:** Can you just take me through them again.

**CHAIR:** I do not think time allows us to do that. You could put them on notice.

**Senator CAMERON:** Chair!

**CHAIR:** Dr Grimes has said he has been through the damn things.

**Senator STERLE:** We have got time.

**Senator CAMERON:** Dr Grimes, take me through it again.

**Dr Grimes:** I think we have already gone through it. Any further matters we will take on notice. I think those matters have been adequately covered.

**Senator CAMERON:** I am not clear and I am asking you to go through them again.

**Senator Abetz:** I think the witness said—

**Senator CAMERON:** If I am not clear on the response, I am entitled to get it clarified. What is the problem?

**Senator Abetz:** And the witness has said he will take that on notice.

**Question:** 56 (continued)

**Senator CAMERON:** No, he didn't. He said he would answer and he would take other things on notice.

**Senator Abetz:** Unless the *Hansard* has changed, I am sure it will indicate he had answered that already and he said he would take it on notice.

**Senator CAMERON:** If you are taking that on notice, can you provide details of the multiple actions you took, when you took them, who you took them with, any correspondence and any phone calls to those multiple actions.

**Dr Grimes:** We will take those matters on notice.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 48 in relation to the detail of actions taken by Dr Grimes.