

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 182
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Programme: Policy and Communications Division
Topic: Portfolio wide - Freedom of Information website accessibility
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 7 March 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Ludwig asked:

1. What was the content of communications with other departments about the website accessibility standards and FOI PDFs?
2. Where did advice concerning the website accessibility certification and provision of PDFs come from and what was the content of that advice?

Answer:

Department of the Environment

1. The Department has had no communication with other departments about website accessibility standards and FOI PDFs.
2. The Department does not provide FOI responses on the website.

Bureau of Meteorology

1. Not applicable.
2. Not applicable.

Climate Change Authority

1. The Climate Change Authority took advice around website accessibility requirements in relation to freedom of information requests from the Department of Industry.
2. Advice came from the Department of Industry legal team under a shared services agreement. It was advised that the provision of PDFs on the website was not a legal obligation and could prove problematic in some instances for people with visual impairment. The Climate Change Authority decided not to provide PDF versions of disclosed documents but provide them free to anyone who requests them and in a version most appropriate for the applicant.

Clean Energy Regulator

1. In the lead up to the first accessibility compliance milestone of 31 December 2012, the Clean Energy Regulator consulted the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) for general advice about accessibility. The Clean Energy Regulator took up AGIMO's suggestion to contact the then Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) for further advice as DEEWR was recognised as having made significant progress with implementing accessibility in their websites and internal system. Officers of the Clean Energy Regulator attended an accessibility discussion session hosted by DEEWR, with other government agencies in attendance, at the end of 2012. There was no discussion specifically around Freedom of Information PDFs.

2. As part of these consultations, AGIMO provided advice on website accessibility certification and the general provision of PDFs. AGIMO classified PDFs as an inaccessible format that was not yet sufficiently mature to pass all accessibility requirements.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

1. GBRMPA corresponded with AGIMO and the Department of the Environment by phone and email regarding the website compliance and how to make documents and pdfs accessible. There has been no specific discussion about making FOI documents accessible.
2. The GBRMPA website does not have accessibility certification. Advice regarding accessibility of the website comes from the Web Guide and AGIMO websites. We have also sought advice from website developers, SQUIZ, during and after the implementation of our corporate website. In 2013, accessibility consultancy firm Alpha Computing has conducted staff training in making documents accessible online.

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

1. No specific advice/discussions about the website accessibility standards and FOI PDFs has been sought from other departments.
2. Not applicable.

National Water Commission

1. There has been no communication with other departments about website accessibility standards and FOI PDFs.
2. Not applicable.

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Not applicable, as the Department of the Environment monitors the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's website.