

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

31 May – 2 June 2011

Question No: BET 39

Topic: External debt collectors

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Xenophon asked:

1. Can the ATO guarantee that any information (including TFNs) supplied to external debt collection agencies is not sent offshore?

Answer:

1. Yes. The contracts between the debt collection agencies and the ATO specifically state that no taxpayer information, including tax file numbers, can be provided to, or accessed by, a person outside locations controlled by the Commonwealth of Australia.

The ATO conducts comprehensive annual reviews of the information technology systems and accommodation security of the debt collection agencies. These reviews test that all security requirements in relation to the storage and handling of taxpayer information as specified in the contracts, are being strictly adhered to.

The contracts also specify that collection agency staff are required to undertake the same security clearances processes, including police checks, as required of ATO employees.