

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 5 - Workplace Relations & Economic Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0904_12

Senator Abetz provided in writing.

Question

Qantas Dispute

Reference is made to Parliamentary Question on Notice 1328. 1. When was the Deputy Secretary first advised of Qantas' decision to lock out its workforce and ground the airline? 2. Why did it take an hour and a half for the Minister to speak to the Deputy Secretary of the Department? 3. Given legal advice was provided to the Minister prior to 29 October 2011, was the Government aware of the damaging affect that the continued industrial disputation was having on the economy?

Answer

1. The Minister left a message on the Deputy Secretary's mobile phone at around 3.10 pm on 29 October 2011, briefly outlining the situation at Qantas and asking that his call be returned. The Deputy Secretary subsequently spoke with Qantas, returned the Minister's call and left a message at around 3.25 pm. The Minister and Deputy Secretary spoke at 3.38 pm.
2. As stated in the response to Parliamentary Question 1328, "Minister Evans is ... on the public record as confirming that Qantas gave the Government a 'couple of hours notice". Given the grounding commenced at 5 pm on 29 October 2011, this suggests the Minister was informed of Qantas' decision at around 3 pm, only shortly before he rang the Deputy Secretary.
3. As stated in the response to Parliamentary Question 1328, the Government was aware of stakeholder claims that the Qantas dispute was having a damaging effect. The Government's awareness of the effect of Qantas industrial disputation on the Australian economy was evidenced by the continued decisive action it took in making an application to Fair Work Australia to terminate impending industrial action shortly after being advised of Qantas' decision to ground its fleet, as it threatened to cause significant harm to an important part of the Australian economy.