



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Secretary
Lisa Paul AO PSM

Senator Marshall
Chair, Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator

Redacting material provided to the Committee

I refer to the Senate Estimates hearing on 17 October 2012 in which the issue of producing redacted material to the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee (the Committee) was discussed.

The department uses Adobe Acrobat X Pro software to redact material from documents where that material is exempt from release to a Freedom of Information (FOI) applicant. For FOI requests the department elects to replace the redacted text with a 'no fill' rather than with a colour fill such as black. In accordance with the department's FOI obligations, an applicant is provided with a schedule detailing where and why any material has been redacted.

The above practice was adopted when the department recently provided a document to the Committee with certain sensitive material removed. However, as the provision of the material to the Committee was not done pursuant to the FOI Act, the department did not provide a schedule. The department subsequently offered to provide the Committee with such a schedule.

I understand that the Committee is concerned that the department's practice of using no fill makes it more difficult to discern where a redaction has been made than in circumstances where a black fill is used. For this reason, in the hearing on 17 October 2012, you requested that the department advise whether it will implement the practice of 'blacking out' for the Committee.

In the limited circumstances where it is necessary to remove text from a document before providing it to the Committee, the department now undertakes to insert a text box around any deleted material and insert the phrase 'redacted material'.

The department trusts that this practice will alleviate the Committee's concern and ensure that it is clear to the Committee where any material has been redacted from a document produced.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Paul

11 February 2013