Finance and Public Administration Legislative Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Australian Public Service Commission

Estimates 2004-05 – Additional Estimates, February 2005

Question: PM 23

Senator Carr asked: Please provide a table listing details of all consultancies for the 2003/04 financial year, for the department and all associated agencies within the portfolio. Please include the following:

- The costs for all completed consultancies, both budgeted and actual;
- The costs for ongoing consultancies, both budgeted and for the current financial year;
- The total costs for all consultancies, both the amount expended in the current financial year, and the total budgeted value of all consultancies running in the current financial year;
- The nature and purpose of the consultancy;
- The method by which the contract was let;
- The name and details of the company and/or individual who is carrying out, or carried out, the contract.

Answer:

For the 2003-04 financial year, Australian Government policy required agencies that are subject to the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 (FMA Act) to report all Commonwealth contracts and agency agreements, including standing offers, with an estimated liability (including GST where applicable) of $2,000 or more in the Gazette Publishing System (GaPS - now called AusTender), within six weeks of entering into the arrangement. The information recorded in AusTender includes a short description of each contract, the provider of the goods or services, the value of the contract and the selection process. The Australian Public Service Commission has complied with this policy. Details of all consultancies with a contract value of $2,000 or more are therefore already publicly available, albeit not in a form that distinguishes consultancies from non-consultancy contracts. Further, the Commission's annual reports provide information about the number of consultancy contracts let in the financial year to which each report relates, and the total value of payments made to consultants each year, regardless of when the consultancy contract was let. Annual reports also list each consultancy contract let during the year with a value of $10,000 or more, and provide details of the consultant's identity, the purpose of the consultancy, the contract price and method of selection.

The Commission considers that the preparation of answers to the questions placed on notice would involve a significant diversion of resources and elicit information already on the public record. In the circumstances, the Commission does not consider that the additional work can be justified.   The Commission is ready, of course, to provide further information about any particular contract to which it is a party.