



Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee— Additional Budget Estimates February 2009

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: Lights in Senator Brown's Office

Question P2, Hansard reference F&PA 3

Senator BOB BROWN—Can you explain why there are a row of lights in my room for which there are no switches, which you cannot turn off and which burn morning, noon and night regardless?

...

Mr Kenny—I have just been advised that they should not be on, so we will look at it.

Senator BOB BROWN—And they are on all weekend. Could you tell me why, when it is an internal courtyard, they should burn all night? What security reason is there? I am thinking about much wider security here—the security experts tell us that climate change is the biggest security issue facing the planet's future. Why should an internal room have lights burning all night? Who is watching? Does that area have a camera on it that if somebody passes through that light is going to tell somebody? It just does not add up. There is no rationale for it.

Mr Thompson—Could we take that on notice? Our offices are very similar to yours with a similar aspect, and at night time our lights are off. I am a bit puzzled that yours are on. It is the same end of the building—

Answer

1 The lights to which Senator Brown is referring are called the pelmet lights, located next to the windows. The original intent of these lights was for architectural illumination of the building in lieu of external spotlights shining on the building walls.

2 Due to the architectural requirement to provide a consistent lighting pattern, the pelmet lights were installed with automatic controls via the Building Management System (**BMS**). For many years the majority of pelmet lights have been turned off.

3 With the change in the threat level after September 2001, the pelmet lighting was turned on for the Ministerial wing.

4 Over the years, individual room occupants have requested that their pelmet lights be turned on and, in some cases, manual switching has been installed to facilitate local control.

5 In Senator Brown's suite, the BMS control relay that automatically switches the pelmet lights in his suite failed, so that the lights remained on. This fault has been repaired.