

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Additional Estimates 23-27 February 2009

Question: PM39a-n

Outcome 1, Output 5

Topic: Cabinet submission co-ordination process review

Hansard Page: Written Question

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 April

Senator Fifield asked:

- a) **What is the status on Cabinet submission co-ordination process review?**
- b) **When did the review commence?**
- c) **What was the result of the investigation into security concerns relating to Cabinet documents?**
- d) **Who undertook the investigation?**
- e) **How long did the investigation take?**
- f) **Will the results of the investigation be made public?**
- g) **If not, why not?**
- h) **If so, when will the result of the investigation be made public?**
- i) **Have measures been put in place to improve the security of Cabinet documents?**
- j) **Have policies and procedures been updated for dealing with all cabinet documents?**
- k) **Is the lack of coordination comments slowing the policy development process?**
- l) **If it has not resumed, are Ministers and their Departments still given an opportunity to comment on upcoming policies during the development process?**
- m) **How is this process undertaken?**
- n) **How does this process allow for FOI provisions?**

Answer:

- a) Following the Fuelwatch Cabinet leak, an internal Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) inquiry was undertaken and completed last year. PM&C resumed providing written coordination comments on all Cabinet submissions from 3 November 2008.
- b) The internal PM&C inquiry commenced in late May 2008.
- c) Following the internal PM&C inquiry, technical adjustments and enhancements were made to the electronic transmission and printing of coordination comments on CABNET (a purpose-built network for processing, managing and circulating Cabinet documents). Enhancements were also made to document tracking arrangements in ministerial offices, supported by written guidelines. Departments have reviewed their handling arrangements for Cabinet documents.

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- d) The Deputy Secretary, Governance, PM&C led the internal inquiry.
- e) The internal PM&C inquiry report was completed in late June 2008. Work was then undertaken to implement the recommendations, which was completed in early November 2008.
- f) No.
- g) Disclosure of the internal inquiry report would compromise the integrity of the security arrangements and processes for handling Cabinet documents. The revised handling arrangements have been notified to direct stakeholders (ministerial offices and departments).
- h) It is not proposed to make the internal inquiry report public.
- i) Following the internal PM&C inquiry, technical adjustments and enhancements were made to the electronic transmission and printing of coordination comments on CABNET.
- j) Enhancements were also made to document tracking arrangements in ministerial offices, supported by written guidelines. Departments have reviewed their handling arrangements for Cabinet documents.
- k) No. Temporary arrangements were in place from May to November 2008 for PM&C to provide oral coordination comments until the additional security measures were implemented. See (a) above.
- l) See (a) above.
- m) See (a) above.
- n) This process has no impact. PM&C continues to act in accordance with the provisions of the FOI Act.