

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Additional Estimates 2010-11

Question: 7

Topic: RDA Volunteer Letter

Asked By: SENATORS JOYCE, MACDONALD AND FIFIELD

Type of Question: Hansard F&PA 117-119

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 April 2011

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE—So, how did this happen? How did we have something that is completely non-compliant with the unlawful work discrimination process and it has come out with a Regional Development Australia header on it? There it is. It came to my office. Why would it ask for a prescribed ethnicity?

Ms Beauchamp—Can I take the issue on board and take it on notice? I have just been presented with it. You have heard from us that these are not employees—they are volunteers—and I think that says here that they are volunteers. We will take this on notice and provide you with a full answer to the question you are raising.....

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Skill gaps I can understand; representative gaps, as Senator Joyce points out, representative of the ethnicity, age or gender would hardly seem to be appropriate. Surely they would be looking for the best qualified person, which may well incorporate those people but not be particularly related to that. Would you agree?

Ms Beauchamp—As I said earlier, we will take this on board and have a closer look at it. I am not trying to be unhelpful but I do want to have a look into this a bit more.....

Answer: The Department has been advised that the Regional Development Australia Brisbane committee's approach to seeking expressions of interest in vacancies held by volunteers on that committee does not constitute unlawful discrimination.