



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

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13 February 2012

Ms Christine McDonald  
Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee  
The Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms McDonald

**ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING  
13 FEBRUARY 2012 – DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE**

At the hearing on Monday 13 October 2012, the Senate Department took three questions on notice. The responses are provided below:

**1. Senator DiNatale asked if there was a room booking for the Privileges Committee**

In November 2011 a booking was made on behalf of the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges for Committee Room 1S6 for a series of meetings in 2012. As mentioned in evidence at the hearing, these bookings are for Thursdays in sitting weeks (including days on which the estimates committees are scheduled to hold hearings).

**2. Senator Moore asked about departmental staffing, in particular people who "work between committees" and short term placements filled by retired Senate department officers**

Committee Office staff respond to the workload generated by the Senate. The generalist nature of Senate officers means that as a group supporting over 20 standing, select and certain joint committees and 40 to 50 inquiries simultaneously, secretariats expand and contract according to the committee workload. This occurs on an ongoing basis and where the workload in one secretariat temporarily increases beyond the capacity of the usual staffing level, assistance will be provided by staff from another secretariat who will typically assume responsibility for an entire inquiry or inquiries. Due to the fluid nature of these arrangements,

it is difficult to provide a meaningful snapshot of which officers are providing such assistance.

Where the increase in the workload of committees occurs across all, or almost all, committees, more staff will be appointed over and above the budget allocation provided to the Committee Office. This has been the case throughout 2011-12, where additional staff were appointed during many months of increased activity.

In addition, officers with particular technical expertise may be seconded to assist a particular inquiry. Currently an Australian Public Service Level 4 from the Australian National Audit Office has been seconded to work for a period of approximately four months supporting the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee with its inquiry into Procurement Procedures for Defence Capital Projects.

Currently, no former (that is, retired) officers are employed by the department in the Committee Office. Two former Senate officers were engaged in a non on-going capacity during 2011 to support the increase in committee work. Both were engaged as Parliamentary Executive Level 1 officers and provided research and report drafting services.

**3 Senator Parry asked about the availability of committee room bookings on-line and if a booking could be flagged as private**

While committee room bookings are not available on the web, information is provided through the Members and Senators portal at

<http://repiis1.parl.net/OnlineServices/cribdaily/Cribdaily.asp>

Furthermore, if there is a request for a booking to be flagged as 'unadvertised', it will not show on the HMS Channel 8 or the above page on the portal.

Yours sincerely

(Rosemary Laing)