

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Finance and Administration Portfolio**

**Department of Finance and Administration**

Budget Estimates Hearings 2003-04 – 28 & 29 May 2003

**Question: F47**

**Outcome 3, Output 3.1.1**

**Topic: Whips Clerk**

**Hansard Page: F&PA 427**

**Senator Ray asked:**

It is a serious question that a whip's assistant for the Labor Party in the Senate gets a secretary assistant but the good old National Party – your close friends and colleagues – get a clerk when they have only got three other colleagues. Why is that?

**Answer:**

The Leader of the Opposition is allocated a block of personal staff positions at various levels.

The number of positions is 21% of the number of personal staff of the Government parties. The numbers and levels are reviewed each year.

It is for the Leader of the Opposition to decide the level of positions assigned to the Opposition Whips.

In 1996, following the Federal election three 'Clerk to Whip' positions were made available to the Leader of the Opposition as part of the block of personal staff.

The Leader of the Opposition allocated only one of those 'Clerk to Whip' positions to the Chief Whip. The other two Clerk positions were allocated elsewhere by the Leader of the Opposition at the equivalent level.

In the review of numbers and levels of Opposition staff in March 1999 the Prime Minister allocated an additional 'Clerk to Whip' position to the Leader of the Opposition. This position was also allocated to the Shadow Ministry by the Leader.

In each case where the position was allocated by the Leader of the Opposition to a person other than a Whip, the title was changed to Private Secretary Grade 1 to reflect the allocation.

These positions continue to be included in the overall personal staff allocation for the Opposition Leader. They are now titled Assistant Adviser.