

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Budget Estimates 2007-08 - May 2007

Question: HS10

Outcome 1, Output 1

Topic: Centrelink – Functions

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: F&PA 74

SENATOR LUNDY asked on 24/05/2007:

Senator LUNDY—...I would like a list of exactly who was invited to that particular function and precisely who made the decision to tick off an endorsed Liberal candidate to host that function on behalf of the government. To me, that is an appalling breach of protocol. I would like to check this from your answers to questions on notice. but I do not believe that Senator Jan McLucas was invited to that event.

Senator Ellison—With the hosting of these functions, there sometimes could be an official from, say, Hearing Services or the agency involved with Hearing Services. I think members of the board have done some. When I say that it is invariably a member of parliament, it can be officials; it can be officials of or a member of the board of Hearing Services.

Senator LUNDY—But not endorsed Liberal candidates. Surely you are prepared to concede that.

Senator Ellison—I will take that on notice and get back to you...

Senator MOORE—Minister, perhaps we could find out—if there is not a threshold ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to that question—whether there are any other cases where endorsed candidates have hosted functions.

Senator LUNDY—Whether, in an election year, there are any cases of inserting endorsed Liberal candidates in the place of sitting members.

Senator Ellison—Mr Chairman, I have taken this question on notice.

Senator LUNDY—Please take that extra question on notice.

Answer:

Ministerial Guidelines for the Human Services Portfolio require that, when there is a function run by a Human Services Agency, a member of the Government or an official from the Agency presides over the function. At these events, members of the general public are able to attend.

There have been two occasions, however, where candidates, rather than sitting members, have been invited to attend Australian Hearing events. In April 2006, the now pre-selected Australian Labor Party Candidate for Corio, Mr Richard Marles, was inadvertently invited to attend rather than the sitting Member. Mr Marles accepted the invitation but did not attend as the event was subsequently cancelled. In February 2007, the Member for Leichhardt was invited to attend an agency event.

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Due to the sitting of Parliament the Member was unable to attend and requested a staff member, Ms Charlie McKillop, attend in his place. Ms McKillop was subsequently preselected to contest the seat of Leichhardt. This staff member subsequently resigned her position with the Member for Leichhardt and as a result did not attend the event.