

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE
Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio
Department of Climate Change
Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2008



Written question reference: CC3

Outcome/Output: Response to climate change if relevant

Topic: Charter Letters

Hansard Page: F&PA 109

Question: (FIFIELD)

When did the Prime Minister meet with Minister Wong to discuss her portfolio duties and who holds copies of those minutes?

Answer:

Over January and early February 2008, the Prime Minister conducted a series of meetings with each senior portfolio Minister and the Cabinet Secretary. These meetings were arranged as an opportunity, early in the life of the new Government, to discuss the Prime Minister's and Ministers' views on each portfolio's key objectives, priorities and performance measurement and reporting arrangements.

At the conclusion of these meetings, draft charter letters summarising each portfolio's priorities were prepared by the relevant Department and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and provided to the Prime Minister's Office. Following the receipt of all the draft charter letters, the Prime Minister decided that their distribution was not necessary at that point in the Government's first term. As a result, the charter letters were not finalised or issued.

The manner in which successive governments have managed their priorities, including whether charter letters or other approaches are used, has changed from time to time. It is a longstanding convention before this Committee that the policy on how priorities are set by a Government, and the nature or content of those priorities, is not disclosed, to maintain Cabinet confidentiality.

The Prime Minister continues to discuss the Government's objectives including delivery of its election commitments with each Minister.