

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES MAY 24 2010**

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

**Department/Agency:** AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

**Outcome/Output Group:** 1

**Topic:** Freedom of Information

**Senator:** Barnett

**Question reference number:** PM 66

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** Friday 9 July 2010

- (a) Has the Department/agency received any advice from the Government or any other source on how to respond to FOI requests?
- (b) How many FOI requests has the Department received?
- (c) How many have been granted or denied?
- (d) How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

**Answer:**

- (a) During the term of this Government, the Commission received the following advice on how to respond to FOI requests:
  - On 30 April 2009, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, wrote to all agency heads subject to the FOI Act, outlining the government's FOI reform objectives and asking that agency heads seek to enhance a culture of disclosure by making it clear to FOI decision makers that the starting point for considering FOI requests should be a presumption in favour of giving access;
  - The Commission takes into account guidelines on the operation of the FOI Act that are updated from time to time by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet;
  - The Commission subscribes to the FOI practitioners' network which regularly publishes up-to-date advice on FOI matters and conducts information seminars;
  - Commission employees utilise training materials published the Australian Government Solicitor;
  - The Commission has from time to time obtained legal advice in relation to individual FOI requests.

- (b) During the term of this Government the Commission received 17 FOI requests.
- (c) Of the 17 requests referred to above, eight were granted in full, eight were granted in part and one was withdrawn by the applicant.
- (d) During the term of this Government no conclusive certificates were issued in respect of FOI requests to the Commission.

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