



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

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17 June 2011

Ms Christine McDonald
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms McDonald

**Budget Estimates Hearing 23 May 2011
Department of the Senate
Further answer to Questions on Notice**

I refer to my letter of 1 June 2011 in which I provided answers to questions taken on notice when the Senate Department appeared before the Committee on 23 May 2011.

Now that the Committee Secretariat has provided the final index of questions on notice, I provide answers to the additional questions regarding furniture placed on notice by Senator Fifield.

1. *Does the Office of the Black Rod have plans to replace furniture in:*

a. Senators' offices?

Yes. Furniture is due for replacement and will be replaced in staff offices, reception areas and where relevant, meeting rooms of senators' suites. The furniture replacement relates to "status C" furniture. (Furniture in senators' offices is "status B" furniture and is not included in the scope of this project.)

b. Departmental offices?

Yes. Workstations, mobile pedestal units, storage units, meeting tables, meeting chairs and visitor chairs in departmental offices will be replaced.

c. Communal areas?

Meeting spaces are being created in two of the outer corridor attendant stations (first floor north and ground floor south) and new meeting tables will be installed there. No other communal areas are in the project scope.

2. *What is the estimated cost for this new furniture?*

The estimated cost of new furniture and its installation is \$4.35m. The majority of this is capital expenditure and will not impact on the Department's operational budget.

3. *What is the estimated cost for the installation of the new furniture?*

Answered in question two; installation has not been estimated separately.

4. *Did representatives from the Office of the Black Rod participate in the project team that reviewed the replacement of furniture in the House of Representatives?*

The replacement of office furniture for staff of Senators and Members and staff of the Chamber departments is being reviewed by an external consultant. The furniture project team working on the replacement of Senate wing furniture is also working on the replacement of House of Representatives furniture and provided information to the external consultant.

5. *Does the current furniture in the Senate wing in any way pose Occupational Health and Safety hazards?*

The lack of adjustability and ability to reconfigure the current furniture due to a lack of components presents occupational health and safety risks. Desktop computers and work practices have evolved in the 23 years since the current furniture was installed and in many cases staff are working with furniture configurations that are not optimal.

6. *What will be the key differences between the old furniture items and the new furniture items?*

New workstations will be height adjustable and we expect the majority to be rectilinear, in keeping with contemporary practice and to achieve space efficiency. Increased storage options will be available. The new furniture will be in better condition in comparison to the old furniture which has endured 23 years of use. The new furniture will provide the ability to better configure offices to meet user requirements because stocks of the necessary components will be available.

7. *How will the replacement of furniture interact with the logistics of moving 12 senators out of the building and 12 new senators in July?*

From late June to mid August 2011 we will in fact move 34 senators, 12 of whom are new senators. Trial office furniture will be installed late June to early July and will

include staff office furniture for SG.35. The resources dedicated to senators' moves are not heavily involved in the furniture replacement project so the interaction with senators' moves will be minimal.

8. *How long will it take for all the furniture to be replaced?*

The purchase of the new furniture by the Department of the Senate is not expected to commence until later in 2011 and is expected to occur over an extended timeframe of several years.

9. *Will there be any disruptions to occupants of the Senate Wing as a result of the furniture replacement?*

While there will be some disruption to occupants of the Senate Wing, disruptions will be kept to a minimum through the staged approach to furniture replacement. No replacements would occur during sitting periods. Larger areas would be done during the longer recess periods.

10. *Does the Department have sufficient capital funding to complete this project without further funding allocations?*

Yes, the department has accumulated reserves from prior year departmental appropriations of \$10.7m (2011-12 PBS table 1.2) and in addition receives an annual capital appropriation of \$0.8m (2011-12 PBS table 3.2.1). The project budget of \$4.35m can be accommodated without seeking additional funding.



(Rosemary Laing)