

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: 1.2 – Official and ceremonial support
Topic: Recognition of the Australian Women's Land Army

Senator: Faulkner

Question reference number: 56

Type of question: Hansard, pp 110-111, 23 May

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 8 July 2011

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator FAULKNER: This is also on the recognition issue, and goes to the issue of the Australian Women's Land Army. There has been a longstanding view that there ought to be recognition of the Australian Women's Land Army as a fourth ancillary service. This is something, of course, that the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs have had involvement in. By way of background, it is obviously fair to say it is not a defence honour and it is not in any way related to veterans' benefits. But there has been a suggestion, and I wonder if this has been drawn to the attention of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet? I think it appropriate that the question be raised here, given the circumstances, there are now around 450 living members of the Australian Women's Land Army remaining, of the appropriateness of now presenting to permanent members of the Women's Land Army who enlisted for the duration of World War II a brooch, a booklet and a certificate. Is this something that the department has been engaged in or is aware of? Can you assist me with that?

Mr Lewis: I am sorry, I cannot assist you. I am not aware that any approach has been made to the department, but I would not rule it out. There may have been some early approaches made. It certainly has not developed any momentum in relation to the work of relevant officers of the department to my knowledge. Perhaps if I could take that question on notice? I need to speak to the precise section that is doing this work and we could come back to you.

Answer:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) administers the Civilian Service Medal 1939-1945, an award in the Australian honours system which recognises the service of eligible civilians in Australia during World War II. Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) is an eligible group for this medal. More information is available at www.itsanhonour.gov.au.

In December 2010, PM&C provided advice to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister to reply to representations to the Prime Minister regarding recognition for former members of AWLA.

PM&C understands that former members of AWLA seek to be recognised as former members of the Defence Forces and receive medals for wartime Defence service, however AWLA was never legally part of the Defence Forces. PM&C is aware of a suggestion that AWLA members be offered a commemorative brooch and certificate to be presented at a ceremony by the Governor-General. PM&C considers that, given AWLA's existing eligibility for the Civilian Service Medal 1939-1945, further recognition of the contribution of AWLA to the war effort is a matter for the Defence portfolio. PM&C will engage with the Department of Defence on this issue to identify any further opportunities to recognise the members of the AWLA.