

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates Hearing 21-24 May 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.3 Support Services for Government Operations

Topic: Regulation of lobbyists. OECD framework compliance

Senator: Senator Rhiannon

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Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 6 July 2012

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Question:

The Senate inquiry into the federal regulation of lobbyists, which reported in March, failed to make any recommendations for reform despite clear evidence that Australia lags behind countries like Canada and the US and widespread calls for the regulation of in-house lobbyists and the lobbying of all MPs.

1. Is there any of your budget quarantined to ensure policy work to ensure Australia is complying with the framework the OECD has provided for the regulation of lobbying, considering Australia is a party to the OECD?
2. Is it of concern that the Commonwealth lobbyist scheme does not presently comply with OECD principles, which state, for example: Where transparency and integrity are the principal goals of legislation, effectiveness is best achieved if definitions are broad and inclusive, and the theatre of lobbying activities is also defined broadly and inclusively.

Answer:

1. In accordance with normal procedure in managing the Department's appropriation, no specific part of the funds allocated to the Department has been allocated for policy development relating to the Lobbying Code of Conduct.
2. The Government considers that the current Lobbying Code of Conduct and Register of Lobbyists are the appropriate level of regulation at the federal level. The Committee's inquiry into the Lobbying Code of Conduct and the Register of Lobbyists in 2012 found that the regime established in 2008 is working effectively and provides transparency to this aspect of government activity. The Committee considered that the Code and Register are meeting its aim of allowing ministers and

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other government representatives to identify the interests being represented to them by those on the Register.