

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: 1.1.2 National Security and International Policy

Topic: Australia and China - annual ministerial summits

Senator: Senator Ryan

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Question:

Senator RYAN: So there is no agreement for an annual ministerial summit between Australia and China?

Ms Tsirbas: I can simply refer you to the comments of the Prime Minister.

Senator Chris Evans: Perhaps I can take that on notice for you, Senator. All the officer can do is tell you what the Prime Minister said. She is struggling to interpret the exact answer to your question. I am not aware of the answer. As I say, on a ministerial level, minister to minister, there is a lot of contact. As to this proposition about a ministerial council, I am just not sure.

...

Senator RYAN: I will take it, unless corrected on notice, that there is no agreement for an annual ministerial summit between Australia and China. What I am subsequently interested in is: is the department working to establish an agreement for an annual ministerial summit between Australia and China?

Senator Chris Evans: Perhaps the best thing I can do is get a proper answer for you out of PMO and come back to you later in the morning

Answer:

Australia already has a range of regular ministerial meetings with China.

The Australian Government has been discussing with Chinese counterparts ideas on how to achieve more structured bilateral dialogue arrangements to give greater strategic direction to the relationship.

Those discussions are at an early stage – there is no deadline. Both sides are committed to building a comprehensive, constructive and cooperative relationship that will continue to serve our mutual interests.