

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates Hearing 27 May-6 June 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Advice regarding condolence motions

Senator: Senator Ryan

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Question:

Senator RYAN: I would like to turn to another matter now. Who is responsible—I am assuming it is the department, but I am happy to be corrected—for advising the spouse or partner of a deceased member, minister or senator about whom a condolence motion is being moved? Who is responsible for advising a spouse or partner that that is happening? Is that the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet or would it potentially be done by one of the parliamentary departments? The Prime Minister, or someone on behalf of the Prime Minister, does move motions occasionally of condolence, so I am starting here.

Ms Leon: I do not have any knowledge of it. I think it may be handled in the office but I will just check with my people to see if we have had any involvement. I am not aware of the department being involved—

Senator RYAN: I thought it might come to the coordination officials that work with both parliamentary departments about the legislative program. The reason I raise it is that on 12 March the Prime Minister made a statement of condolence in relation to the death in February of the the Hon. William "Bill" Morrison AO, a former Whitlam minister. His widow only became aware of this after the event and apparently was rather upset. Probably more so for the event than the motion, but it was just a courtesy, I think. I am just trying to chase down where it was—

Ms Leon: I will see what I can find out.

Answer: The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has no role in advising the families of deceased members or senators in relation to motions of condolence. We understand that the chamber departments support the Presiding Officers in relation to appropriate contact with the families of deceased Members and Senators.