

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Office of National Assessments

Budget Estimates Hearings 2005-2006, 31 October 2005

Question: PM 55 to PM61

Topic: Order for departmental and agency contracts

Hansard Page: Direct on Notice

Senator Murray asked:

1. What guidance is provided to staff with responsibilities for contract negotiations specifically about the requirements of the Senate Order? If relevant guidance is not provided, please explain why this is the case.

Staff are provided with relevant DoFA and ANAO guidance material, in particular Financial Management Guidance No 8, and are required to comply with this material.

2. What training and awareness sessions are provided, either in-house or through other training providers (eg. DOFA, APS Commission or private firms) in respect of the Order? Please provide a list of the dates, the identity of the training providers and the content of the training that staff attended in 2005. If training and awareness sessions are not provided, please explain why this is the case.

No training and awareness sessions were conducted in ONA. Preparation of contracts and the Senate Order information remains within a small section of ONA with experienced and long-term staff

3. Has the department/agency revised its procurement guidelines to incorporate the new Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines that took effect from 1 January 2005, particularly with respect to the confidentiality elements contained in those guidelines? If so, when did this occur and can a copy be provided? If not, what is the cause of the delay and when will the revision occur?

The Office of National Assessments is undertaking a revision of its Chief Executive Instructions and this will incorporate revision of the procurement guidelines

4. ANAO audits for the last three years have revealed a consistently low level of compliance across most agencies with DOFA confidentiality criteria (February 2003) for determining whether commercial information should be protected as confidential. The ANAO's latest report on the Order (No.11 2005-2006, September 2005) states that departments and agencies need to give higher priority with this important requirement of the Senate Order.

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Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Additional Estimates Hearings 2004-2005, 14 February 2005

- **What specific measures have been or will be taken to address this problem, give it higher priority and raise compliance levels?**

This issue will be addressed in the revised CEIs

- **What guidance and training are provided to staff about the confidentiality criteria and the four tests employed to determine whether information should be protected?**

The small section of staff concerned with this issue keep up-to-date with DoFA and ANAO information. Advice is also sought as necessary from the portfolio department, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.