

## **Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration**

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2009

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

### **Outcome 3, Output 3.1**

**Topic: Parliamentary Entitlements Advisory Committee**

**Question reference number: F65**

**Type of Question: Hansard F&PA 86-87, 20 October 2009**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 4 December 2009**

**Number of Pages: 1**

**Senator Ronaldson asked:**

...I suspect that a decision was made in context in relation to the word 'deplorable'. The wording you allowed through was 'the deplorable move by the Burmese regime comes several months after,' etcetera. What you are effectively saying is that it is all right under these new rules to describe a foreign government as deplorable but members and senators are banned from describing their own government, of any colour, in any context, as being dreadful. Minister, that is about as close to censorship as I reckon you can get. I ask you to take that example on notice and again review that situation. Basically, Ms Mason, I could not say in relation to this policy that the whole scenario is utterly ridiculous and a clear indication of incompetence, could I? I could say it was ridiculous, but I could not call it incompetent.

### **Answer:**

The Department of Finance and Deregulation administers Parliamentarians' entitlements and has been asked to provide an optional vetting service to provide advice on material Senators and Members propose to produce using the printing and communications entitlement, to ensure the material complies with the legislation. The Department's Parliamentary Entitlements Advisory Committee (PEAC) determines whether any conditions attaching to the entitlement as expressed in the PE Regulations have or have not been met.

Senators and Members have a choice as to how and when to use their publicly funded entitlements – but when they choose to, it must be in accordance with the parameters of the entitlements. There is no question of censorship.