

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 19 October 2009

**Question: PM12(a-d)**

**Topic: Situation Room (Parliament House Briefing Room)**

**Type of Question: Written**

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

**Number of pages: 2**

- a) How long will actual construction of the Parliament House Briefing Room (PHBR) take?**
- b) What facilities in the new PHBR will improve real time communications, compared to those in the Cabinet Room?**
- c) Will members of the other parties and non-government officials be allowed access to the PHBR in order to develop appropriate responses to crises?**
- d) The Information Circular (30 Sept, No. 2009/44) stated that DPS is developing a relocation plan for the 20 staff who currently reside in MG18. What are the details of this relocation plan?**

**Answer:**

- a) Work on the PHBR is expected to commence in the upcoming Parliamentary Summer Recess, with construction currently scheduled for completion around mid-2010.
- b) Under current arrangements, the Cabinet Room offers a limited capability for Ministers to communicate in 'real time' with other decision makers not co-located, and for officials to support ministerial briefings using information and communications technology (ICT). The PHBR will provide a secure, 'networked' facility to support the strategic-level decision making process in an incident or crisis of national significance. In the event of a crisis, Ministers will be able to use the PHBR to:
  - receive briefings from senior officials supported by video, imagery and other data; and

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- communicate securely with other decision makers, including state and territory first ministers, foreign leaders, and to participate in meetings when located interstate and at some Australian overseas posts via secure videoconferencing.

The PHBR will also provide Australia with similar facilities to those of other nations, such as the US, UK and NZ.

c) The primary purpose of the PHBR will be to assist the Government to respond to emergency events, including natural disasters and local and international security incidents. Access to the PHBR would be granted on a case-by-case basis for this purpose.

(d) The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) advises that of the 20 DPS staff, 18 will be relocated to temporary accommodation in the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) building at 3-5 National Circuit, Barton. The costs of relocation and accommodation will be borne by AGD from the National Crisis Coordination Capability project. The staff will move on 3 December 2009, and return when alternative accommodation has been constructed at Parliament House in early 2011.

The remaining two staff have been relocated from the Ministerial mail room (which is part of the MG18 footprint) to a new area on the first floor of the Ministerial Wing.