

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Supplementary Estimates Hearing – October 2010

Outcome: 2, Program: 2.1

Topic: Public Interest Reasons for not releasing material related to Red Book Briefing in relation to Government Business Enterprises

Question reference number: F16

Type of Question: Hansard (F&PA 132, 19 October 2010)

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 3 December 2010

Number of Pages: 1

Senator Cormann asked:

Sure, but there is a passage there about things that need to be done to bring those guidelines into line with the highest international standards, and there is a passage in this section which has been blacked out. Can you explain why that passage was blacked out?

Mr Tune—No, I cannot.

Senator CORMANN—Can you take on notice as to why it was blacked out?

Answer:

The department's decision to release or not release the information redacted from the department's "Red Book" briefing, attempted to strike a balance between the public interest arguments for and against disclosure.

The department recognises that there is a general public interest in disclosure to increase the scrutiny of departmental operations and enhance the democratic process through better informed public debate.

Nevertheless, in this instance, the department decided that the public interest in non-disclosure outweighed that of disclosure. This was because the information related to decisions that have yet to be made where the public interest is in keeping final decisions of government separate from the processes and considerations that contributed to the making of those decisions. The redacted material was neither final nor conclusive and not necessarily reflective of the nature and content of any decisions may ultimately be made by Ministers in relation to the matter.