

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2010

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: HMC portraits

Question: P 2

Hansard reference F&PA p19, 18 October 2010

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

Ms Scroope—In recent times—and you are testing my memory now—the first portrait of former Prime Minister Fraser that was done was rejected and a new portrait was done and the first portrait of the former Governor-General Sir John Kerr that was done was rejected and a new portrait was done. There were some other examples I think from the 1920s and 1930s.

Senator FAULKNER—So who rejected them? Was it the majority of the Historic Memorials Committee?

Ms Scroope—Yes, I believe in both cases it was. Also part of the vetting process involves referral to the visual arts board of the Australia Council. They may have also been consulted and confirmed the rejection. I would have to check our records.

Answer

1 According to file records, the first portrait of Sir John Kerr, by artist Sam Fullbrook, was completed in 1978 and was rejected by the Visual Arts Board (VAB) on the grounds that it did not meet “an appropriate technical standard”. The Fullbrook portrait was also rejected by the Historic Memorials Committee (HMC). The Chair of the Committee stated that “a majority of members considers the portrait to be inappropriate for the collection”.

2 File records for Mr Fraser’s first portrait, painted by artist Bryan Westwood, indicate that, after its completion in 1983, the portrait was approved by the VAB. However, Mr Fraser was not happy with the painting and requested that it not be put on public display. Members of the Historic Memorials Committee were advised of Mr Fraser’s concerns before they viewed the portrait. A majority of committee members thought that the portrait was suitable for the collection; but, given Mr Fraser’s strong views, the (then) Chair of the committee, Prime Minister Hawke, decided that a second portrait would be commissioned.