

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 18-21 October 2010

Question: PM24

Asked By: Senator Payne

Topic: COAG Reform Council - Appearance

Type of Question: FPA 66-67, 18 October

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Senator PAYNE-I preface my next question by saying that the council has generously offered me, as shadow minister in this area, a private briefing, which I am very happy to take up once we can find a time that is convenient to members of the council's agenda and the parliamentary agenda. Can you indicate what the reasons for their reticence in appearing were, Mr English?

Senator Chris Evans-Apart from the obvious.

Senator PAYNE-That is right, Minister.

Mr English-My understanding was they spoke directly to the secretariat for the committee. I was not party to that discussion.

Senator PAYNE-Do you know what the reasons they gave were?

Mr English-I understand that they feel there is a difficulty in appearing before one committee like this when they are, in effect, a multijurisdictional activity.

Senator PAYNE-There are a number of multijurisdictional activities, as you put it, which appear before Senate committees, though.

Mr English-I think it would be better to ask-

Senator PAYNE-I would love to ask them. Trust me.

Mr English-I can take it on notice.

...

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Senator PAYNE-I appreciate that and I will, as I said, take up the offer of the CRC for a briefing. But, in terms of the volume of work, the number of reports and inquiries, that the council is producing and the criticisms, constructive and otherwise, I suspect, that it is making, I think it is more than unfortunate that they cannot be directly questioned by members of the Senate in the estimates process.

Senator Chris Evans-I am not sure the officers can help you, but I am happy to have a look at the issue, if you like and take the issue, rather than the question, on notice.

...

Senator Chris Evans-No, I am just saying that there are a range of grey areas that we seem to have entered into in the last few years that we might need some broader guidance on. Anyway, I will undertake to have PM&C have a look at it, and I will also undertake to have a chat to the chair about their interactions.

Answer:

If requested, the Secretariat of the COAG Reform Council will attend the relevant Senate Estimates hearings.