

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 17-20 October 2011

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.1 Domestic Policy

Topic: Tasmanian Forests IGA - Triabunna woodchip mill discussions

Senator: Senator Abetz

Question reference number: 45

Type of Question: FPA, p 98, 17 October 2011

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 December 2011

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator ABETZ: If officials were not involved in discussions with any parliamentarians, Minister, can you take notice whether the Prime Minister was involved in a discussions with any parliamentarians, in particular one who may have been advocating on behalf of a donor to his political party of \$1.6 million who was anxious for this intergovernmental agreement to go through so that they could be a bargain priced purchases of the Triabunna woodchip mill?

Senator Chris Evans: Without responding to what is clearly a loaded question, I can say that I will take on notice the question about whether there are any negotiations involving other members of parliament. I assume you mean the Commonwealth parliament. Obviously they are in negotiations with the Premier of Tasmania. I will take it as being members of the Commonwealth parliament. I will take on notice the question and see whether there is any information we can give you.

...

Senator ABETZ: No. You would have heard the questions asked by Senator Brown of Senator Ludwig during question time in relation to this particular matter, ensuring that no Commonwealth money would go to certain interested parties in relation to the purchase of the Triabunna woodchip mill, which was predicated on the intergovernmental agreement being finalised to the satisfaction of Gunns and wanting to see off the field another competitor for that woodchip mill. If you could take that on notice I would be much obliged.

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Answer:

The disclosure of specific communications between members and senators and the Prime Minister could tend to diminish the capacity of members and senators to properly discharge their parliamentary duties.