

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2013 - 2014, 26 February 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000043

OUTCOME: 0 - Whole of Portfolio

Topic: Ministerial Leave

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Ludwig Joe

Question:

1. Was the minister on leave at any point during the Christmas break (between the last sitting of parliament in 2013 and the first sitting in 2014)? If so:
 - a. Please table a schedule of the ministers leave. Please include:
 - i. The dates the minister was on leave.
 - ii. The dates the minister was out of the country (if applicable).
 - b. Who was acting in the minister's place?
 - i. What date was it decided to have this person act in the minister's place?
 - ii. What was the process for selecting this person?
 - iii. Who was involved in making this decision?
 - c. Were there any matters with which the department needed to make contact with the minister during this time? If so:
 - i. Please provide a list of these matters and the date they occurred
 - ii. Please provide a copy of any correspondence, emails, notes etc between the minister and the department during this time.
 - iii. Were there any times that the department was aware that it would be unable to communicate with the minister?
 - iv. Were there any times that the department tried to contact the minister but were unable?
 - d. Were there any matters with which the department needed to make contact with the acting minister during this time? If so:
 - i. Please provide a list of these matters and the date they occurred
 - ii. Please provide a copy of any correspondence, emails, notes etc between the acting minister and the department during this time.
 - iii. Were there any times that the department was aware that it would be unable to communicate with the acting minister?
 - iv. Were there any times that the department tried to contact the acting minister but were unable?
 - v. but were unable?
 - e. Did the department contact the Minister or acting minister during this time? If so:
 - i. Please provide a list of these matters and the date they occurred
 - ii. Please provide a copy of any correspondence, emails, notes etc between the minister and or acting minister and the department during this time.

Answer:

1.

a. and b.

Between the last sitting of Parliament in 2013 and the first sitting in 2014 the:

- Minister for Health, the Hon Peter Dutton MP, was on leave from 10-24 January 2014 (inclusive) and the Minister for Social Services the Hon Kevin Andrews MP, was the acting Minister for Health during this period; and
- Assistant Minister for Health, Senator the Hon Fiona Nash, was on leave from 18-27 January 2014 (inclusive) and the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield was the acting Assistant Minister for Health during this period.
- Personal details relating to portfolio Ministers' leave is considered private information of the Minister/s.
- The selection of acting Ministers is a matter for the Government.

c. to e.

As a matter of course, during periods of Ministerial leave the department continues to send material in the usual way to our portfolio Ministers' Offices for appropriate handling (which may include consultation with the acting Minister) and/or attention of the Minister on return. The Department does not support a practice of direct engagement with acting Ministers and/or their offices.