Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2013-2014

Cross Portfolio

DEEWR Question No. EW0162_14

Senator Abetz asked on 4 June 2013, Hansard page 72

Question

FOI requests

Senator ABETZ: With respect, it has not been like that for a long, long time, because I thought we were given a wonderful environmental explanation last time that if you were to grey out the page or black out the page it would use a limited resource of ink which was not good for the environment. That was one of the rationales offered to the committee. I do not think that rationale had been around for a long time, had it Ms Paul? This department changed its protocols and that is why the problem arose with a committee and why the committee made its request. Ms Paul: I do not think it is a recent thing. I could take that on notice but I do not think it is a recent thing.

Answer

On 5 September 2012, the department wrote to Senator Abetz (see response attached).

In that response, the department explained that:

- o   Since 2011, the department has used Adobe Acrobat X Pro software to redact material from documents.
- o   When outlining material to be redacted, Adobe Acrobat X Pro provides an option for the deleted text to have a 'fill colour' inserted. The department, in an effort to keep printing costs down, uses the 'no colour' fill option.
- o   Prior to the use of Adobe Acrobat X Pro, the long-standing practice of the department, since at least the early 2000's, was to use white redacting tape which was placed over the exempt material. This was then photocopied to produce the documents for release. The result was similar to the current practice.
- o   The FOI Act does not prescribe the manner in which redactions are to be made from material to be provided to an FOI applicant.