



**SENATOR THE HON. ERIC ABETZ  
LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE  
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT  
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE  
LIBERAL SENATOR FOR TASMANIA**

**SENATE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
SENATE ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES  
OPENING STATEMENT**

I am delighted to report that all 127 Questions on Notice for this portfolio were tabled ahead of the deadline – the first time in at least 6 years that this has occurred in this portfolio. How this contrasts to the Budget 2013/14 Estimates where just 16% of responses were tabled on time and the Supplementary Estimates from 2012/13 where just 12% of responses were tabled on time is for others to comment on. Needless to say, in my experience, the professionalism of the public servants providing questions for clearance in time is rarely an issue.

Since the last round of Senate Estimates, the Government has introduced legislation consistent with its election commitments to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission and to establish a Registered Organisations Commission. It is disappointing that the Opposition has decided to delay these two important reforms from further debate in the Senate until at least March.

Later today, the Government will introduce into the House of Representatives the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014 that delivers on some key aspects of the Government's *Policy to Improve the Fair Work Laws* – nothing more and nothing less. The Government will seek to self-refer this legislation to this Committee for consideration. Nonetheless, I am happy to take questions on this Bill tonight when the Department joins me at the table.

The Deputy Secretary, Workplace Relations and Economic Strategy Ms Sandra Parker will be at the table for agencies' appearances today which may assist Senators with some questions that are incorrectly addressed to an agency that can best be answered by the Department of Employment.

We look forward to taking your questions.

27 February 2014