

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2008-09 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 2

DEEWR Question No. EW846_09

Senator Mason asked on Wednesday 22 October 2008, EEWL Hansard page 21.

Question

When a copy of the Review into On-Costs for the National Secondary School Computer Fund will be available to the Senate Standing Committee

Senator MASON – Good. A copy of those reports has gone to the Prime Minister, the Minister – Ms Gillard – and also the Treasurer. Is that right?

Dr Arthur – And the Minister for Finance and Deregulation.

Senator MASON – I asked you if you could table that, and clearly you see why the opposition would like that information, and you said it is advice to government.

Dr Arthur – It is in the nature of advice to government.

Senator MASON – Right. Mr Chairman, I have advice from the Deputy Clerk of the Senate and I want to refer to it, if I can. 'There are no restrictions on committees asking about advice to ministers, the preparation of which is a major function of the Australian Public Service and a large number of statutory authorities. Senators are empowered in legislative and general purpose standing committees to require the giving of evidence and the production of documents.' Then I have an attachment to this document that provides grounds for public interest immunity claims. They include things like commercial interests, legal proceedings and national security interests. One of the unacceptable grounds, Number 3 listed under 'The following grounds have not been accepted by the Senate in the past,' is advice to government. So that has not been accepted as a reason for not providing information in the past. Again, I call for that information.

Dr Arthur – It is not my position to comment on Senate rulings.

Senator Carr – We will take your request on notice.

Answer

The Review of Legitimate and Additional Financial Implications of the National Secondary School Computer Fund is available on the website

http://www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au/publications_resources/review_nat_sec_school_computer_fund.htm