

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates Hearing – May 2010
Department of Finance and Deregulation
Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Outcome 1, Program 1.1

Topic: Alternative Policy Costings

Question reference number: F25

Type of Question: Hansard F&PA 60-61 26 May 2010

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 July 2010

Number of Pages: 2

Senator Ryan asked:

Mr Tune—In one instance we have been asked for a costing on an alternative policy scenario, if I can put it that way.

Senator RYAN—What was that alternative policy scenario?

Mr Tune—That was around the freeze on Public Service numbers and what the implications would be.

Senator RYAN—And that request for an alternative policy scenario came from the minister?

Mr Tune—The minister's office.

Senator RYAN—Was that request verbal or in writing?

Mr Nicol—It was via email.

Senator RYAN—Could you take on notice for us to have a copy of that email?

Senator Sherry—We will have to take that on notice.

Mr Tune—We will have to take that on notice, obviously.

Senator RYAN—Are you taking on notice consideration of providing that or taking on notice the provision of that? I appreciate you may not have it handy as we speak.

Senator Sherry—No—we will take on notice consideration.

Senator RYAN—Minister, inform me, with your longer experience in this place: as far as I am aware, such a document is not exempt from the request for information by estimates committees.

Senator Sherry—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator RYAN—Are you asserting a public interest immunity claim?

Senator Sherry—No, I am not asserting. I am taking it on notice.

Senator RYAN—You are taking on notice consideration. Taking on notice refers to—

Senator Sherry—I will take advice on the matter you are raising.

Senator RYAN—I suppose I cannot ask my next question until I get the answer to the first one.

Senator Sherry—I will try and get you an answer.

Senator RYAN—Thank you

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Answer:

The Chief of Staff to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation sent an e-mail request to the then Deputy Secretary of Budget Group within the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) on 14 May 2010. The e-mail noted that the Minister has requested “a departmental costing for ... a freeze on public sector employment excluding defence, Centrelink, customs, the security agencies (AFP) and border security functions within immigration.”