

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2020-21

Finance Portfolio
21-22 October 2020

Department/Agency: Office of Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance

Outcome/Program: General

Topic: Briefings in the Lead-up to Budget

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question reference number: F019

Type of question: Hansard Proof, 21 October 2020, F&PA Committee, page 81

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 04 December 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator GALLAGHER: Okay. Were you provided with any briefings on these projects in the lead-up to the budget?

Senator Cormann: I don't believe I was provided with any briefings in the lead-up to this budget. But, as I've indicated to you—

Senator GALLAGHER: Do you want a copy of the list of the projects?

Senator Cormann: That might be useful, but I might have to take that on notice. I would say in the broad that of course we engage with crossbench members of parliament and of course from time to time we put forward our proposals for their consideration and they put their proposals forward for our consideration. And after all the relevant processes have been followed we from time to time make the relevant decisions. But I have not been part of any discussion in this budget context along the lines you're suggesting. ...

Senator GALLAGHER: Okay. Can you advise us of whether any of these proposals were being planned for funding by the government prior to Centre Alliance putting them forward?

Senator Cormann: I'll have to take that on notice. Again, I don't want to take anything away from Centre Alliance. Centre Alliance, over a number of years, has advocated in relation to a number of projects. That's, obviously, not a recent thing. And I'm pleased to see that Centre Alliance is very happy that, in the 2020-21 budget, a number of projects that they strongly advocated for were, indeed, funded.

Answer:

I have regular meetings with all crossbench senators who put forward a range of policy priorities. Certain priorities for Centre Alliance were funded in the 2020-21 Budget.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2020-21

Finance Portfolio
21-22 October 2020

Department/Agency: Office of Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance

Outcome/Program: General

Topic: Agreement Reached Between Parties

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question reference number: F020

Type of question: Hansard Proof, 21 October 2020, F&PA Committee, pages 81, 82

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 04 December 2020

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator GALLAGHER: So, in terms of the negotiations that Ms Sharkie says formed part of this \$40 million outcome, did Centre Alliance promise anything in return? I'm not talking specifically about this budget. Was there any agreement reached between the parties on any level?

Senator Cormann: I've got to take that on notice. In terms of these measures in this budget, there wasn't any specific agreement in the context of this budget in relation to any of these projects—

Senator GALLAGHER: But not in relation to this context of the budget—more broadly.

Senator Cormann: I'll have to go back and refresh my memory in which context these particular—

Senator GALLAGHER: You'd know, though.

Senator Cormann: I don't. I've got—

Senator GALLAGHER: You'd know if you had an agreement with Centre Alliance.

Senator Cormann: I've got to refresh my memory in which context these various projects were raised.

...

Senator Cormann: I think what sorts of measures Centre Alliance has supported over the years is a matter of public record. I see Senator Waters here. I think that we've negotiated, at some point, with the Greens in relation to the backpacker tax. I think Senator Di Natale referenced that in his valedictory speech. I think that there was an alignment and an agreement to provide additional support for a particular environmental program, in that context. If you want me to go back over seven years of discussions and representations, I'm happy to do that, but I'll have to do that on notice.

Senator GALLAGHER: No. I'd like to know if there is a written agreement between the government and Centre Alliance.

Senator Cormann: I'll have to take that on notice. I've already said to you that I've not signed an agreement in relation to the 2020-21 budget. I've not had any specific discussions about the 2020-21 budget, but, in terms of what was discussed when over the last seven years, I'll have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The funding provided in the 2020-21 Budget was not linked to any agreement to work with Centre Alliance on procedural issues in the Senate. Agreements to work with each other to facilitate the orderly proceedings of the Senate are a matter for individual parties or individual senators represented in the Senate.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2020-21

Finance Portfolio
21-22 October 2020

Department/Agency: Office of Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance

Outcome/Program: General

Topic: Letters

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question reference number: F021

Type of question: Hansard Proof, 21 October 2020, F&PA Committee, page 83

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 04 December 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator Cormann: We certainly have an agreement that Centre Alliance would not be supporting Labor's attempts to disrupt the government's program; that is true.

Senator GALLAGHER: Is that a written agreement?

Senator Cormann: We put some terms in writing to ensure that there was clarity in which circumstances Centre Alliance would be able to pursue certain measures.

Senator GALLAGHER: Can you table those letters?

Senator Cormann: I'll have to take that on notice.

Senator GALLAGHER: Why?

Senator Cormann: I haven't got any documentation in front of me.

Senator GALLAGHER: But why would you need to take it on notice? You could say, 'Yes, I will table them later,' or 'No, I won't table them.'

Senator Cormann: It's because I have to review whether that is appropriate or whether there is a public interest immunity that ought to be claimed.

Answer:

Agreements to work with each other to facilitate the orderly proceedings of the Senate are a matter for individual parties or individual senators represented in the Senate.