



Australian Government

Department of Health

Acting Secretary

Senator Katy Gallagher
Chair
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Via email:

Dear Senator

Thank you for your letter of 11 May regarding a verbal question on notice taken at the 23 April 2020 Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 hearing.

I would like to reaffirm that the Department of Health is committed to supporting the Committee in its important work. We have demonstrated this through our attendance at several hearings, including the upcoming hearings on 13 and 26 May. In addition, we are also endeavouring to respond to verbal and written questions on notice as quickly as possible given the Department's responsibilities leading the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) has portfolio responsibilities for the National Security Committee. Following your letter I have sought advice from PM&C on the question. Please find enclosed a revised response to your question regarding the National Security Committee.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Edwards

// May 2020

Encl (1)

cc: Mr Patrick Cronan, Chief of Staff, via email

Phone:

Email:

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Thursday 23 April 2020

Question Number: 01

Question Subject: Briefing Cabinet

Type of Questions: Hansard, page 3, 23 April 2020

Questioner: Senator Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: When were you first asked to brief the cabinet?

Prof. Murphy: Let me just have a look. I think I briefed the National Security Committee of cabinet that weekend. I'd have to go back and check that. I'd better take it on notice. We certainly raised the travel advisory, because we'd made recommendations through cabinet around 22 to 23 January. I don't have a record here of when I formally first briefed cabinet. Most of my briefings have actually been to the National Security Committee of cabinet. I've briefed the full cabinet on three or four occasions, but I've probably briefed the National Security Committee of cabinet two or three times a week since that pandemic situation evolved in late January.

Original answer:

Please refer questions regarding the National Security Committee to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C).

Revised answer:

In line with portfolio responsibilities, as noted in the previous response, PM&C advise that:

It is a longstanding practice not to disclose information about the operation and business of the Cabinet and its committees, including when a matter went to Cabinet, who attended, and what form of submission was provided, as to do so could potentially reveal the deliberations of the Cabinet, which are confidential.