

Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Attorney-General's Department

Hearing date: 30 July 2021

Hansard page: 34

Question type: Spoken

Senator Jenny McAllister asked the following question:

CHAIR: Has the Attorney-General's Department received terms of reference for the task force or any formal description of its function or role?

Ms Field: I don't believe that I have seen a copy of the terms of reference, but they may have been given to somebody else in the department. I will take that on notice.

The response to the senator's question is as follows:

The Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce Oversight Board endorsed the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce in April 2021. The department, as a member of the Oversight Board, received a copy of the Terms of Reference as part of this process.

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Senator Jenny McAllister asked the following question:

CHAIR: Has there been any discussion within the task force about how to manage this tension? We deliberately have an Electoral Commissioner who is independent of government, but we now have a government task force providing advice to the Electoral Commissioner. Has there been any discussion about any changes that might need to be made to the ordinary way that you'd operate to make sure that that task force doesn't compromise the processes of an election or the independence of the commissioner?

Ms Field: Not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

The response to the senator's question is as follows:

The agencies participating in the Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce (the Taskforce) continue to operate in line with their usual legislative and administrative arrangements, including as they apply during a caretaker period. While participating agencies collaborate and share information to inform their respective roles, the Australian Electoral Commissioner remains independent in the exercise of their functions and powers.