

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Arrangements put in place in relation to sharing of Mr Jim Reed's research

Senator: Watt

Question reference number: 0181

Type of question: Hansard, page 16-17, 11 August 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 August 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator WATT: I asked you last time, given Mr Reed's background as a Liberal Party pollster, whether any protocols had been put in place to ensure that the research he was undertaking at public expense was not being shared with the Liberal Party or any other political operation. Was anything done to ensure that wouldn't occur?

Mr Thompson: I think I answered at the time that there would have been contact between staff in the commission who were working on the whole-of-government communications function and the PMO. That's not unusual. Beyond that, I'm not aware there were any other provisions put in place. But I would say that the original selection of Resolve Strategic was using a Department of Finance, whole-of-government campaign advertising supply register—the panel-like arrangements that exist for providers.

Senator WATT: I remember you saying that. So you're not aware of any steps having been taken to ensure that departmental or ministerial staff were not sharing that polling that Mr Reed conducted with the Liberal Party?

Mr Thompson: I'm not aware of any additional arrangements that were put in place.

Ms Foster: I'll check this fact for you, but my understanding is that the contract included provisions that ensured that the material was provided only to the Commonwealth government.

Answer:

Please refer to response to Question on Notice 0083.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Sharing of Mr Jim Reed's research

Senator: Watt

Question reference number: 0182

Type of question: Hansard, page 17, 11 August 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 August 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator WATT: Could you please take on notice whether Mr Reed's research was, in fact, shared with the Liberal Party.

Ms Foster: We can take that on notice.

Mr Thompson: We'll take it on notice.

Senator WATT: By the Prime Minister's office, I mean.

Mr Thompson: Understood.

Answer:

Please refer to Question on Notice 0083.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Advice regarding the Independent Inquiry into Aged Care

Senator: Gallagher

Question reference number: 0191

Type of question: Hansard, page 27, 11 August 2020

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 August 2020

Number of pages: 2

Question:

CHAIR: In terms of aged care, has PM&C provided any advice, or has the Prime Minister sought any advice, about an independent inquiry into the failures that have been identified in aged care?

Ms Foster: Not to my knowledge. If any officers here with me have any further information, I'd ask them to come forward, but I don't believe we have that.

CHAIR: Okay. I understand that the firm that's been looking at Newmarch is going to review St Basil's in particular, but this isn't an independent inquiry. Can you take on notice for me whether the government is considering a proper, independent inquiry into the failings in aged care?

Ms Foster: Yes, we can do that.

Answer:

The matter of a further, independent inquiry is a matter for Government.

Independent reviews have been undertaken regarding the outbreaks at Dorothy Henderson Lodge and Newmarch House. The independent review into Newmarch House, by Professor Lyn Gilbert and Adjunct Professor Alan Lilly, was publicly released on 24 August 2020. The review into the outbreak at Dorothy Henderson Lodge, by Professor Lyn Gilbert, was released on 25 August 2020.

Further independent reviews will be undertaken regarding the outbreak at St Basil's Home for the Aged and Heritage Care Epping Gardens in Victoria.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (Royal Commission), established on 8 October 2018, is taking submissions addressing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in aged care until 4 September 2020, and what can be learned from this experience for responding to future pandemics, infectious disease outbreaks or other emergencies.

The Royal Commission also undertook hearings on the response to aged care on 10-13 August 2020, at which Commonwealth officials appeared as witnesses.

The Government has invested more than \$1.6 billion to support senior Australians in aged care since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The investment includes an additional \$734.8 million announced in August to extend support for the sector's response to the pandemic as part of the aged care response plan. Wherever there are high rates of community transmission, the risk to older people and particularly those in residential aged care increases as demonstrated by the experience in Victoria.