

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Invitations to the Prime Minister

Senator: Kitching

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Question:

Senator KITCHING: I am asking whether there are criteria that the Prime Minister or his office takes into account, when he is deciding or they are deciding when he will attend an event or when he will not attend.

Senator Brandis: The nature of it is, as I heard the question, the availability of the Prime Minister.

Senator KITCHING: What happens if the Prime Minister cannot attend? Does he, straight out, decline to attend? Are there other options, other processes put in place?

Senator Brandis: It will all depend on the circumstances.

Senator KITCHING: But he could send a representative to attend.

Senator Brandis: In an appropriate case, he could and does.

Senator KITCHING: Or perhaps send a message, for example.

Senator Brandis: In other cases he may do that as well.

Senator KITCHING: What percentage of invitations does the Prime Minister accept?

Senator Brandis: I do not know.

Senator KITCHING: Could you take that on notice? There must be a log of invitations.

Senator Brandis: I do not know. You are speculating as to what the procedures are.

Senator KITCHING: Could you check with the Prime Minister's office as to whether there is a log of invitations which are kept in his office. I imagine any well-run office would—

Senator Brandis: You want me to inquire of the Prime Minister's office whether a log of invitations is kept? I will do so.

Senator KITCHING: I am trying to assist you, Senator Brandis. From there, what is the percentage of invitations that he accepts? And therefore, also, what percentage of invitations does the Prime Minister decline and what percentage does the Prime Minister send a representative to? Also, what percentage does the Prime Minister provide a message for? I would also like to know how often Mrs Turnbull attends functions with the Prime Minister. What are the standard staffing arrangements for events attended by Mr Turnbull? I would like a breakdown in terms of departmental staff and personal staff.

Answer:

The Prime Minister is invited to and attends a range of events. As has long been the case, the invitation log is confidential – as to ascertain the permission of people who invite the Prime Minister to something would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.