

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 5-6 JUNE 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Australian Hearing – Correspondence with the Department of Finance

Question reference number: HS 5

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Hansard page 112, 5 June 2014

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 July 2014

Number of pages: 20

Question:

Senator CAMERON: Have you had any formal correspondence by email or letter with the department on this issue?

Mr Hutson: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: Can you table those documents.

Mr Hutson: I will take that on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Do you see any reason why you could not table them?

Mr Hutson: I would have to have a conversation with the Department of Finance, but at the moment, I will take the question on notice.

Senator CAMERON: I would ask you for all times of any telephone conversations and dates of telephone conversations. I would like all correspondence both by letter or by email from and to the Department of Finance.

Mr Hutson: Yes, I will take that on notice.

Answer:

There have been a number of informal telephone conversations between officials of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance since the budget announcement on 13 May 2014. Most of these conversations were of a general nature discussing administrative aspects of the scoping study and no records were kept. Details of two conversations where records were kept are at Attachment A.

There has only been email correspondence exchanged between officials of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance since the budget announcement on 13 May 2014. These are attached:

- Attachment B – 14 May 2014, exchange of emails between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance on arrangements for the scoping study and a draft letter for Australian Hearing.
- Attachment C – 16 May 2014, exchange of emails between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance relating to the scoping study and possible discussions with officials.

- Attachment D – 20 May 2014, offer of staff support from the Department of Human Services to assist the Department of Finance with the scoping study, if required, to progress the study in a timely manner.
- Attachment E – 22 May 2014, exchange of emails between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance providing further background information on Australian Hearing and the draft scoping study terms of reference. The attachments to this email have not been provided as they contain commercially valuable business information, which could be expected to unreasonably affect KPMG and Australian Hearing in respect of their commercial affairs.
- Attachment F – 26 May 2014, comment from the Department of Human Services to the Department of Finance on the draft scoping study terms of reference.
- Attachment G – 3 June 2014, exchange of emails between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance on a brief for Senate Estimates. The attachments to this email have not been provided as information on briefing provided to Ministers is not normally made publicly available in order to maintain agencies' ability to properly and effectively brief Ministers.
- Attachment H – 4 June 2014, exchange of emails between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Finance regarding a draft letter to Australian Hearing.