

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES - 21 NOVEMBER 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Emergency Management – NSW Bushfires

Question reference number: HS 1

Senator: Name

Type of question: Hansard pages 118-119

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 January 2014

Number of pages: 102

Question:

- a) Mr Tidswell: I get involved with a range of conversations with Emergency Management Australia. There are a number of the government committees that are established, including the Australian Government Crisis Committee. I would have attended a number of those meetings. We would get direct information from the most senior person available from New South Wales—often very senior. That person would give us the extent of what they knew was happening on the ground.

Senator CAMERON: Is this in the New South Wales government?

Mr Tidswell: That is right. We would get a phone hook-up and officers would get the information required to consider what Commonwealth action was needed.

Senator CAMERON: Who was that officer in the New South Wales—

Mr Tidswell: I would have to take that on notice. I cannot recall.

Senator CAMERON: Could you take that on notice and come back to me about who was providing information from New South Wales government to the federal government.

- b) Senator CAMERON: Who from the department was liaising with the state government?

Mr Tidswell: We have good, established relationships with state departments responsible for invariably the community services side and the emergency management side. We would have an officer who would be tapping into the state government—

Senator CAMERON: I am asking who that officer was.

Mr Tidswell: I will take that on notice. I am pretty sure who it was for that period of time.

Senator CAMERON: Do you want to tell me? Then you can correct it if you want.

Mr Tidswell: It would have been Amelia Todorova.

Senator CAMERON: Can you spell that for me?

Mr Tidswell: That would be hard for me: T-O-D-O-R-O-V-A—and Amelia.

- c) Senator CAMERON: Can you on notice provide all correspondence—email correspondence, times of telephone calls, any correspondence between Ms Todorova and the New South Wales state government—so we can try to establish what involvement was taking place?

Mr Tidswell: Yes.

Answer:

- a) The Australian Government Crisis Committee met on five occasions from 17–24 October 2013. Representatives from the NSW State Government were present at three of the five meetings, including:
- on 17 October 2013, the NSW Deputy State Emergency Operations Controller;
 - on 21 October 2013, the Chief Executive and Executive Director, Counter Terrorism and Disaster Resilience of the NSW Ministry of Police and Emergency Services; and
 - on 22 October 2013, the Chief Executive and Executive Director, Counter Terrorism and Disaster Resilience of the NSW Ministry of Police and Emergency Services and the Manager, Emergency Management Coordination, Rural Fire Service (on behalf of the Commissioner).

- b) Emilija Todorova liaised with the NSW State Government from Thursday 17 October 2013 to Sunday 20 October 2013. Ms Todorova continued to forward State situation reports after 20 October 2013, but did not have direct contact with the State.

From Monday 21 October 2013, Paula Webber was the liaison officer.

- c) The Department of Human Services seeks advice from the NSW State Government to inform the need for surge support, and around the operation of the department in the affected area. It is not the department's responsibility to review or seek information from the State regarding the activation of Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment or other Federal Government assistance. This is the responsibility of the Attorney-General's Department.

Please see [Attachment A](#) for email correspondence between the department and the NSW State Government. Several emails have been included which were not sent directly to Emilija Todorova or Paula Webber by the State, but were forwarded to them. Several emails received also include attachments.

Please note that the email addresses of non-government recipients have been removed.

The department is unable to provide times of telephone calls as no official call log was recorded.