

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Additional Estimates Spill-over hearing March 2017**  
**Communications Portfolio**  
**Department of Communications and the Arts**

**Question No: 299**

**Program 1.1**

**Hansard Ref: Pages 46-48, 24/03/2017**

**Topic: Requested Electorate briefs March-July**

**Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:**

**Senator URQUHART:** What were the exact dates that the minister requested electorate and state and territory briefs between 1 March 2016 and 2 July 2016?

**Mr Robinson:** We will have to take that on notice as well. It may not have been specific dates that electorate briefing was requested. It may have been just material provided as normal course of business.

**Senator URQUHART:** So you may not necessarily have received a request for it; you may have just issued it. Is that what I am understanding you are saying?

**Mr Robinson:** That may be the case, yes.

**Senator URQUHART:** I am interested in what were the exact dates that the minister requested electorate and state and territory briefs between 1 March 2016 and 2 July? But if you could also provide me with the dates that you provided that to the minister's office as well as a general course of what you would normally do.

**Mr Robinson:** Okay.

**Senator URQUHART:** Are you able to get back to me this afternoon with that information?

**Mr Robinson:** I think that request will probably take us longer. We will have to check the record, which is now about a year ago or a bit less than a year ago, so that will probably take longer.

**Senator URQUHART:** How many electorate briefs would you have provided in a 12-month period?

**Mr Robinson:** I do not know.

**Senator URQUHART:** Is it reasonably regular? How often do you actually provide them as a matter of course to the minister without the minister's office actually asking for them?

**Mr Robinson:** We will take this but my recollection is we previously told the committee that we do actually have these available. They are updated periodically and they are just available for use.

**Senator URQUHART:** Sorry—I am not following you. My question was: how often do you provide them to the minister's office as just a regular update? Is there a frequency of that? Is it spasmodic? What is the process?

**Mr Robinson:** I will take it on notice.

...

**Senator URQUHART:** I understand that, but I am asking you: how many times, as a matter of course, does the department provide the electorate briefs to the minister's office without the minister's office requesting them?

**Mr Robinson:** And I would like to take it on notice.

**Senator URQUHART:** So you do not know that?

**CHAIR:** Senator Urquhart, I think this is becoming somewhat repetitious because you have asked the same question several times—

**Senator URQUHART:** Yes, I know, because I find it—

**CHAIR:** I understand the editorial component—

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**Senator URQUHART:** I am only talking about the state and territory briefs.

**CHAIR:** I think it is very clear to all of us what you are seeking. You have now sought that three or four times, and Mr Robinson has undertaken to take it on notice to provide a correct answer.

**Senator URQUHART:** I just find it very frustrating and concerning that we are here with the department, talking about NBN, and Mr Robinson is not able to provide me with the electorate brief update, nor do they have officials in the room that can provide that information.

**CHAIR:** But the way you have just characterised your question then is not what I interpreted your question to be on the last three times you asked that question. You have just called it an electorate brief, whereas you actually want to know how often things have gone to the minister's office—

**Senator URQUHART:** No, I am talking about electorate briefs. That is what my whole questioning is around at this stage. How many times has the department sent electorate briefs to the minister's office as a general update? How many times has the minister's office specifically requested updates? They were the two basic questions. Mr Robinson has actually indicated that there are other times when information is sent, or whatever, and he will provide further detail on that. I am putting forward my frustration on the fact that this is NBN. The department are here. I would have thought there would have been officials from NBN here to actually answer the questions.

**CHAIR:** NBN is coming up shortly, so as Mr Robinson—

**Senator URQUHART:** Yes, but they do not deal with the electorate briefs.

**CHAIR:** We can keep repeating the same thing over and over, which I do not think is a very good use of our time, but Mr Robinson has, I think, quite clearly and very appropriately, taken the question on notice. If he can provide it today, he will. If not, it will be done in the normal course of events. Is that correct, Mr Robinson?

**Mr Robinson:** Yes.

**Answer:**

See the responses to Question on Notice 300 on 'Requested Electorate briefs updates – Minister' and Question on Notice 316 on 'NBN electorate briefs – General'.