

Senate Economics Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

2015 - 2016

Department/Agency: Treasury
Question: AET 55
Topic: Northern Australia Insurance Premiums Taskforce report
Reference: Hansard page no. 92 - 10 February 2016
Senator: McLucas, Jan

Question:

Senator McLUCAS: Could I go to northern Australia insurance questions, please, as you would have expected? Ms Quinn, you agreed that the report would be available next month when we last met at October estimates. We have not seen the final report of the taskforce yet. Can you give the committee an update of that?

Ms Quinn: Can I just clarify, Senator: you are talking about the Northern Australia Insurance Premiums Taskforce report?

Senator McLUCAS: Yes, the final report.

Ms Quinn: The final report has been provided to the government and they are considering it. You are correct: it has not been released at this stage.

Senator McLUCAS: Was it provided by the end of November as expected?

Ms Quinn: It did progress on the timetable that was anticipated and it was handed to the government before the end of the year.

Senator McLUCAS: When you say 'handwritten to the government', so I can be very clear about what that means, was that to the department or to the minister's office?

Ms Quinn: To the minister.

Senator McLUCAS: Which minister are we talking about?

Ms Quinn: It was provided to the portfolio ministers.

Senator McLUCAS: Generally?

Ms Quinn: Yes. It is the small business minister and Assistant Treasurer who have prime carriage as portfolio ministers.

Senator McLUCAS: To then Minister Billson?

Ms Quinn: No, it was Ms O'Dwyer.

Senator McLUCAS: Ms O'Dwyer as the Assistant Treasurer, and she has carriage of small business now. Sorry, I am just catching up. That was by 30 November?

Mr Lonsdale: It was handed to the government on 24 November.

Senator McLUCAS: From the taskforce's point of view, your job was done in the right time frame?

Ms Quinn: That is right.

Mr Lonsdale: The broad process is that you have the taskforce preparing the report. There was a reference committee with that. The report is finalised and it is presented to government, as Ms Quinn said, to Minister O'Dwyer, and the process then would be that the government would consider its response to the report, and that is what is happening now.

Senator McLUCAS: Can you provide us any indication about why that seems to have taken a lot of time? I do not know whether the department can answer this question, frankly, but that was 24 November and here we are in February. Can anyone give me any indication of why there has not been a publication of the report or something further?

Mr Lonsdale: It is not unusual that when a report is presented to government they carefully

consider what is in the report before either releasing the report itself or the report and the response. That is not unusual.

Senator McLUCAS: Given the pressing nature of this issue—from the government's point of view, frankly, and my point of view too—it has now been all of December, all of January and half of February. It is nearly three months since the government received this report. Minister, maybe you could provide us an indication of why we have not had a government response to this point in time.

Senator McGrath: I will take that on notice, actually.

Answer:

The Northern Australia Insurance Premiums Taskforce Final Report was released publicly on 4 March 2016. The Government is considering the options contained in the report and intends to provide a detailed response by 30 June 2016.