

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Additional Estimates

2015 - 2016

**Department/Agency:** Treasury

**Question:** AET 60

**Topic:** Appointment of the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman

**Reference:** Hansard page no. 101 - 10 February 2016

**Senator:** McAllister, Jenny

**Question:**

(a) **Senator McALLISTER:** Could you step us through the process that led up to the appointment of the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman?

**Mr Boneham:** That was an open merit selection process. It was advertised on 11 September in national papers, and we had a recruitment firm, NGS Global, assist us in finding candidates for that position.

(b) **Senator McALLISTER:** And then what happened?

**Mr Boneham:** An interview process was undertaken.

(c) **Senator McALLISTER:** By whom?

**Mr Boneham:** By Treasury. There was an acting deputy secretary on that panel, the APS commissioner and a deputy commissioner from the Productivity Commission.

(d) **Senator McALLISTER:** Was the interview process to select a single recommendation for the minister? Or did you select a number of recommendations.

**Mr Boneham:** My understanding is that the candidates were ranked, with a No.1, 2, 3 and 4, and then those names were given to the minister.

(e) **Senator McALLISTER:** So, a ranking was provided to the minister, and then it was ultimately the minister's decision to appoint the ombudsman.

**Mr Boneham:** The minister was responsible for making the decision, and that is under the act. I will check that, though.

(f) **Senator McALLISTER:** Can you tell me how many candidates applied for the position?

**Mr Boneham:** Can I take that on notice? I think it was in the 30s, but I do not want to mislead you.

(g) **Senator McALLISTER:** Can you tell me, though, how many candidates were formally interviewed.

**Mr Boneham:** Four.

(h) **Senator McALLISTER:** So, there was a short list of four, all were interviewed and then all four were forwarded to the minister in ranked order?

**Mr Boneham:** I will need to take that on notice, because I am not sure whether after the interview some names were not put forward to the minister. I would need to check that.

(i) **Senator McALLISTER:** That would be good. It would be helpful then if, on notice, you could provide just confirmation of how many applied, how many were interviewed and how many options were forwarded to the minister, and a confirmation that your evidence that they were provided to the minister in ranked order was correct. Are you aware of whether the candidate that was ranked No. 1 was appointed by the minister?

**Mr Boneham:** I would need to confirm that. I was not on the panel, so I will need to confirm what information went up to the minister on that one.

(j) **Senator McALLISTER:** So you will take that on notice?

**Mr Boneham:** I will take that on notice.

(k) **Senator McALLISTER:** I suppose we are conscious that this was a change from the previous arrangements and there is a current Small Business Commissioner, Mr Mark Brennan. Was he interviewed for the role?

**Mr Boneham:** I will need to take that on notice. It was before my time.

**Answer:**

(a) As answered.

(b) As answered.

(c) As answered.

(d) The interview process established the suitability of each candidate for the advertised position. The report to the minister grouped candidates according to suitability, candidates were not ranked.

(e) Section 24 of the *Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Act 2015* provides for the appointed to be made by the Governor-General. Before the Governor-General appoints a person as Ombudsman, the Minister must be satisfied that the person has suitable qualifications or experience and is of good character.

(f) 32.

(g) As answered.

(h) Yes, there was a shortlist of four candidates. Yes, all short listed candidates were interviewed. Yes, all four were forwarded to the Minister. Candidates were grouped according to suitability not ranked.

(i) As above. The candidates were not ranked.

(j) As answered.

(k) In accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles guidelines, the personal information of applicants for the Ombudsman position must remain confidential.