

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

29 May – 31 May 2012

Question: BET 680-683

Topic: Freedom of Information (PC)

Hansard Page: Written (Received from Committee 13 June 2012)

Senator Bushby asked:

680. Has the Department/agency received any updated advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
681. What is the total cost to the department to process FOI requests for this financial year to date?
682. How many FOI requests has the Department received for this financial year to date?
- a) How many requests have been denied and how many have been granted?
 - b) Has the department failed to meet the processing times outlined in the FOI Act for any requests? If so, how many and why?
 - c) Do any of these requests remain outstanding? If so, how many and why?
683. How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests for this financial year to date?

Answer:

680. Yes. For the period from 3 December 2007, the following advice has been received:
- On 30 April 2009, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, the then Cabinet Secretary, wrote to heads of agencies subject to the FOI Act outlining the government's FOI reform objectives and asking that it be made clear to FOI decision-makers that the starting point for considering FOI requests should be a presumption in favour of giving access to documents.
 - On 28 October 2010, the then Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information, wrote to heads of agencies subject to the FOI Act to update them on progress of the reforms to freedom of information laws and seek their assistance in implementing the reforms.
 - Guidelines issued to all agencies on the operation of the FOI Act by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) prior to 1 November 2010 or issued subsequently by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.
 - PM&C 'FOI Guidance Notes – July 2011' issued to all agencies.

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681. The estimated cost for the financial year to 31 May 2012 is \$100.
(Note: this cost may not be comparable with whole year data reported in the FOI Act Annual Report, as the data reported there involves work by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, after collection of raw annual cost information inputs from agencies and ministers).
682. One, for the financial year to 31 May 2012.
a) One, granted in full.
b) No.
c) No.
683. Nil. The power to issue conclusive certificates under the FOI Act was abolished on 7 October 2009.