

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Treasury Portfolio
Budget Estimates 2014
3 June to 5 June 2014

Department/ Agency: Treasury

Question: BET 2

Topic: National Broadband Network – Public Non-Financial Corporation Status

Reference: page 100, 3 June 2014

Senator: Dastyari

Question:

Senator DASTYARI: Minister, do you believe NBN Co should be given PNFC status?

Senator Cormann: The advice that I have been given by my department is that there was absolutely no case for a change in budget treatment, and we have acted consistently with that advice—

Senator DASTYARI: Is that advice you are prepared to make public?

Senator Cormann: on the basis, as I have indicated previously, that, compared to the mess we have inherited from the previous government, which classified it as an investment, we have now put it onto a much sounder footing. If anything, we have improved the quality of the investment, while there is still a long way to go.

Senator DASTYARI: Is that advice public or private? Are you prepared to make that public?

Senator Cormann: I am just telling you—

Senator DASTYARI: I know, but can you take it on notice?

Senator Cormann: I am happy to take it on notice but, consistent with the approach taken by previous governments, including your previous government, we do not usually release that sort of advice.

Senator DASTYARI: But you used to sit here and rail against it.

Senator Cormann: Indeed. I think, intuitively, everybody will be very clear about the very fact that the NBN, the way we inherited it, was a complete mess.

Senator DASTYARI: Some of us disagree with that. But that is a point of policy.

Answer:

Whether Department of Finance advice to the Minister for Finance should be released publicly is not a matter for the Treasury.

The Department of Finance and Deregulation has released guidance on the Classification of government-controlled entities in the Australian Government Budget, which is attached.