

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

2014 - 2015

Department/Agency: Treasury

Question: BET 365 - 371

Topic: Remarks by Treasury Secretary, John Fraser RE: Freedom of Information

Reference: written - 17 June 2015

Senator: Ludwig, Joe

Question:

It was reported in the Australian Financial Review on the 20th of May, 2015 (p7) that Treasury secretary, John Fraser, spoke at a function, hosted by the Grattan Institute, in Melbourne recently. His remarks were centred around Freedom of Information requests and the way he believes FOI scrutiny has caused ministers and those in the public service to be extremely careful about what they put on paper.

365. Are these remarks correctly attributed to Mr Fraser?
366. Have any current ministers expressed to Mr Fraser, whether in writing, verbally or by some other means, that they are careful about putting things on paper? If yes:
- a) Who was the minister/s?
 - b) In what form was this reflection made? (e.g. email, memo, verbally etc)
 - c) On what date were these comments made?
 - d) What issue or subject were the comments made with regard to?
367. Have any public servants expressed to Mr Fraser, whether in writing, verbally or by some other means, that they are careful about putting things on paper? If yes:
- a) What APS level was the public servant at?
 - b) In what form was this reflection made? (e.g. email, memo, verbally etc)
 - c) When were these comments made?
 - d) What issue or subject were the comments made with regard to?
368. Are you aware of any particular incidents during the term of this government where people have been careful not to put things onto paper? If yes:
- a) Could you please outline who the incident involved?
 - b) When was this incident relayed to Mr Fraser?
 - c) How was Mr Fraser made aware of the incident?
369. Does Mr Fraser believe FOI legislation is, on balance, beneficial to society? If no, why not?
370. Could Mr Fraser please provide a summary of any other criticisms he has of FOI legislation and the problems it can cause.
371. What changes would Mr Fraser make to FOI legislation to improve it?

Answer:

365. Are these remarks correctly attributed to Mr Fraser?
Mr Fraser's comments at Grattan are publicly available at: http://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/575_transcript_budget2015.pdf

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369. Yes.
370. Mr Fraser has no comments to make beyond those previously made.
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