

Senate Economics Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2014 - 2015

Department/Agency: Treasury

Question: SBT 4325-4326

Topic: Foreign Investment - appointment of Mr Secker

Reference: Hansard page no. 10-11 - 31 October 2014

Senator: Wong, Penny

Question:

Senator WONG: Mr Donnelly, I want to go through the process of Mr Secker's appointment, please. If you have only been in your position seven weeks, do I have to go back to poor Ms Gerathy?

Mr Donnelly: I suspect so—that is before my time.

Ms Gerathy: I was there last year.

Senator WONG: Would you just tell me about the process. Did the department provide a shortlist or provide advice including a shortlist? I will not ask who was on it; I am just asking if it was provided.

Ms Gerathy: Can we take that on notice just to check the precise process?

Senator Cormann: You can always take a question on notice.

Senator WONG: That is fine. I will spin through my questions and, if you can answer any of them, do so, but I suspect they will be taken on notice. Did the department provide any advice as to the filling of the additional position—sorry, was it an additional position or a vacancy?

Ms Gerathy: It was an additional position.

Senator WONG: When did the department first provide advice about the additional position? Did the department at any stage provide a shortlist of candidates? Was the department ever asked to provide a shortlist of candidates? How did Mr Secker's name come to the minister's attention? Was that as a result of the department or—

Senator Cormann: It was as a result of many years of observing his high qualities and his great attributes to contribute in that particular role, similar to the way that these sorts of decision-making processes—

Senator WONG: Yes, I appointed Anna Bligh, that is true.

CHAIR: The minister has the call.

Senator Cormann: It was in the same way that these sorts of decision-making process were pursued by the previous government and, indeed, governments before that. There is nothing new under the sun here. From time to time, people who have previously served in the federal parliament, in federal government and, indeed, in state governments, from both political persuasions, have been seized on, given their undoubted talents, to make further contributions through public service in one way or another. That is actually something that all of us who are engaged in this profession should welcome because we are involved in a noble profession. Just because we retire from parliament does not mean that all of a sudden we no longer have an opportunity to make a contribution. Mr Secker is somebody who was chosen by the government for that particular role. We take open, transparent responsibility for the appointment that was made. So, if you have any questions in relation to any aspect of this, they are really questions for the government, not for the officials at the table.

Senator WONG: I take it from that that you confirm that Mr Secker was not suggested by the department; he was suggested by the minister's office.

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Senator Cormann: Mr Secker was an appointment by the government, chosen by the government for that role, given his undoubted capacity to make an outstanding contribution in that position. The government, as with all appointments that we make, take full responsibility for the appointments that we make.

Senator WONG: Can you tell me what the remuneration is?

Ms Gerathy: Yes, it is in the Remuneration Tribunal, if I remember—

Senator WONG: A daily rate or hourly rate?

Ms Gerathy: No, it is an annual rate. My recollection—

Senator Cormann: Take it on notice if you are searching your recollection. It is actually on the public record.

Senator WONG: Sure, that is fine. Ms Gerathy, do the provisions in relation to parliamentary pensions and a reduction in entitlement apply here?

Senator Cormann: Obviously, for all members of parliament—and, you would appreciate, it is actually different depending on the individual circumstances of a particular member of parliament. We now have a whole series of different categories of members of parliament, some who are on the old, old pension scheme, some who are on a more recent one—

Senator WONG: He is on the old, we know that.

Senator Cormann: and some of us who are on an accumulation scheme. All of the relevant provisions, whether there are adjustments made to these arrangements when further public service is provided with remuneration, would apply in these circumstances, as they always do.

Senator WONG: If I could, on notice, have how that applies

Answer:

Information on Mr Secker's remuneration can be found in the Remuneration Tribunal's Determination on Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part-Time Public Office (available at: <http://www.remtribunal.gov.au/offices/part-time-offices>).

Any enquiries about superannuation entitlements should be directed to the Superannuation Branch in the Department of Finance (superbranch@finance.gov.au).