

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2013-2014**

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

DEEWR Question No. EW0231_14

Senator Mason asked on 5 June 2013, Hansard page 86

Question

Confidentiality agreements for school funding discussions with Queensland government officials

Senator MASON: Mr Cook, is this a standard confidentiality agreement? Mr Cook: That is my understanding. It is standard in the sense that when we are dealing with legislation that has not appeared before a parliament we— Senator MASON: Yes. This cannot be the first time that a confidentiality agreement of this sort has been— Ms Paul: The minister has described that. We kind of modelled it on the process that has been going on for years and years in the Committee on Industrial Legislation, COIL, where exactly this happens. The employers, the unions et cetera all get into one room and work through draft legislation together under a confidentiality agreement. Senator MASON: I just cannot work out, if there have been precedents for this, why state public servants would be suffering this misapprehension? Ms Paul: It surprised us. It was not all of them. Mr Cook: The only thing that I can think— Senator MASON: It wasn't just the Queenslanders, was it, Mr Cook? Mr Cook: I understand that the Queenslanders might have signed it before the meeting, but I would have to take that on notice. The only possible thing that I can think of is that often these meetings will be with a single department rather than multiple departments. We are working across three government departments in schools reform, premier's, treasuries and education. Often around other things like national partnerships there might just be meetings with education departments, so they would not think beyond that in terms of the notion of what was meant by 'organisation'. That is the only offer I can make as to why there might have been some confusion. But, as we have said, we clarified that immediately. Ms Paul: They had a worry. We fixed it for them. Mr Cook: We utilised the agreement that they all agreed would be best for them and on we went.

Answer

Two Queensland representatives signed the Confidentiality Agreement and returned it to the Department before the exposure draft meeting.

At the beginning of the session, an amended Confidentiality Agreement, clarifying the previous Government's intent that participants could share information within their jurisdiction for the purposes of providing advice, was offered and agreed to by participants.

Both of the Queensland representatives signed the amended Confidentiality Agreement at the beginning of the session.

