

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000583

Senator Cameron, Doug asked on 31 May 2017, Proof Hansard page 51

Also refer to previous hearing Question No. SQ17-000095 and SQ17-000211

Senate Order relating to the Apprenticeships Reform Advisory Group

Question

Senator CAMERON: No, you did not. Why were the documents that the ANAO were provided with not provided to the Senate when the Senate asked for them?

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Dr Banerjee: As I said, each time a request was received, we considered the request, and we complied fully.

Senator CAMERON: Were there any directions from the minister about not providing certain documents?

Dr Banerjee: No, Senator.

Senator CAMERON: Did you seek to have any formal requests made not to provide documents on the basis of commercial in confidence?

Dr Banerjee: I would need to take that on notice because it goes to the exact wording of our response to the Senate on the previous occasions. I do not have that in front of me at the moment. I have tried to answer in general terms.

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Senator CAMERON: Why wasn't that material produced in response to any of the Senate's or my requests?

Dr Banerjee: As I have said, I will take that on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Who made the decision not to include this material, despite repeated requests? Was it you, Dr Banerjee?

Dr Banerjee: I will take that on notice. We go through a normal process in responding to Senate orders of looking at which documents might be in scope within the department. That goes through a departmental approval process and is then provided to the minister, given that it is a parliamentary response.

Answer

In response to a Senate order, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Education and Training, tabled a range of documents on 10 November 2016, in relation to the Apprenticeship Reform Advisory Group and the alternative delivery pilots.

As the Minister set out in his tabling letter to the President of the Senate, some documents were not tabled and some information in the tabled documents was redacted because they either:

- are deliberative in nature and contain information that was provided in confidence, and disclosure could prejudice trust and provision of information in future
- have been subject to Cabinet consideration, or
- contain information that is commercially sensitive and as such could harm the business interests of third parties.

The department has provided detailed summaries of related documents in SQ17-000095 and SQ17-000211 (from previous hearing).