

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Additional Estimates 23-27 February 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Outcome/Program:** Outcome 2: Indigenous  
**Topic:** Questions on Notice

**Senator:** Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

**Question reference number:** 66

**Type of question:** FPA Friday 27 February 2015, page 34

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 10 April 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

Senator McLUCAS: My first question goes to questions on notice. Answers to questions on notice from our last estimates round were due by 31 December 2014. The answers were provided to the committee on 15 February. That is problematic to the committee. We put questions on notice to receive information in order to prepare for the next round of estimates. That is too late. Can you advise why they were that late?

Ms Carroll: We are aware that the questions were late. It was part of the process of getting them all cleared.

Senator McLUCAS: On what date were the answers provided to the minister's office?

Ms Carroll: They were provided to the office on 19 November 2014.

Senator McLUCAS: Now, let us get to it. Minister, on 19 November they appeared in your office and then it took until 15 February to come to the committee. Can you explain why that took so long?

Senator Scullion: No, I cannot but I am more than happy to take that on notice. I was not aware of that.

Ms Carroll: I can clarify that there were two groups of questions on notice. There was one group that was the general PM&C questions and there were also questions from our portfolio bodies with which we had some internal problems relating to where there was a nil answer or a no answer and that was not picked up properly in the answers so they were later.

Senator McLUCAS: So, 19 November was when the PM&C answers went to the minister's office for clearance?

Ms Carroll: That is right.

Senator McLUCAS: Minister, you were seeking some advice about why that took so long in your office.

Senator Scullion: I glared at someone in the back of the room. I am not sure if that constitutes seeking advice. I have no idea. In fact, I checked yesterday that we were all up to scratch on this. I really appreciate the importance of providing timely advice to the committee. I was not aware that this was the case. I have received two pieces of advice. On one set I have been advised that I cannot say.

Senator McLUCAS: That is—

Senator Scullion: That is how long the process took but I have had advice that it is not going to take that long in the future and I can assure the committee that it will not happen again. I do have a broader understanding but, because it involves other departments, I am not prepared to go there. I will seek a more comprehensive answer to that. I do respect that that is the case. As I said, the questions should not normally take that long. I know, because I have signed off on the questions, that most of them were fairly basic questions which I do not think were particularly complex. I will have to find out myself. As you can see, I am not exactly aware of what the shortcomings were and where the delays were. I deal with my briefs in a very timely way and I am disappointed that that is the case.

**Answer:**

The Minister's Office was provided with answers to Questions on Notice by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Indigenous Affairs Portfolio Agencies progressively from 19 November 2014. The complete set of Questions on Notice was received by 5 January 2015.

Answers to Questions on Notice were edited in the Minister's Office including to correct typographical and factual errors in Departmental responses.

Ministerial Office edits were provided to the whole package of answers to Questions on Notice on 5 February 2015 and the Department submitted responses for tabling on 13 February 2015.

The Minister apologised at Estimates for the delay and has instructed his Department and office to ensure all reasonable efforts are made to provide answers on time.