

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 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Administrative Arrangements

Senator: Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig

Question reference number: 125

Type of question: FPA Monday 23 February 2015, page 89

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

Number of pages: 3

Question:

Senator LUDWIG: So did the Prime Minister write to the departments impacted and ask them to do it by such and such a date? Is there correspondence that the Prime Minister sent to the departments?

Ms Kelly: I understand that the secretary corresponded with the relevant departmental heads in relation to that and set a time frame—and I will get you the exact time frame set—so there could be absolutely clear expectations about when all of those negotiations would be completed.

Senator LUDWIG: And that correspondence will be available to the committee?

Ms Kelly: I will just make those inquiries now.

Senator LUDWIG: Thank you very much

Senator LUDWIG: So the information I was after in relation to that letter was—it may be on the face of the record—who wrote the letter, when it was sent, whether it was drafted by PM&C, whether it was an instruction from the Prime Minister to the secretary to prepare the letter, who received the letter, obviously whether the deadlines were met by the various departments and, if not, whether there was follow-up by the secretary for the other secretaries not meeting the deadline? Presumably if they did they wrote back saying that they did. That correspondence would be helpful too. Is that clear?

Ms Kelly: Yes. I am not sure I will be able to get all of that, but I will use my best endeavour to get as much as I can.

Senator LUDWIG: Thank you

Answer:

The Prime Minister wrote to the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 22 December 2014 asking that the machinery of government changes be agreed by affected agency heads within two months. A copy of the Prime Minister's letter is attached.

The Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provided a copy of this letter on 5 January 2015 to the Secretaries of the Departments of Education and Training, Industry and Science, Social Services and the Treasury, as well as to the Secretary of the Department of Finance and the Australian Public Service Commissioner.

Agreement on the transfer of resources between the affected departments was finalised within two months.



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: B14/3689

22 DEC 2014

Mr Michael Thawley AO
Secretary
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
1 National Circuit
CANBERRA 2014

Dear Mr Thawley

I refer to the new ministry and administrative orders that I have recommended for the consideration of the Governor-General.

I want machinery of government changes consequent on those new ministry and administrative orders to happen as expeditiously as possible. The relevant Australian Public Service protocols provide that the agency heads and secretaries directly affected should arrange the appropriate transfer of resources in a professional and timely way. Where roadblocks emerge or unresolved issues are unsettled after a reasonable period, the protocols envisage that a committee comprising the Public Service commissioner and the secretaries of Finance and the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and chaired by the latter, will arbitrate. Since the new ministers are being sworn in just before the Christmas holiday period, I think two months is a reasonable time for changes to be agreed. If issues are unresolved after that time, you should promptly convene the committee and make a binding arbitration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Abbott', written over a horizontal line.

TONY ABBOTT