

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: Acting Appointments

Senator: Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig

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Question:

Senator LUDWIG: ... The organisational chart currently includes 20 acting appointments. Has that changed? Has that gone up or down? It is a very recent examination by me. I just want to make sure that I was correct about that.

Ms Cross: I would have to take that on notice. I do not have that data in front of me.

Senator LUDWIG: It seems a high level of acting positions. Is there a reason why you have so many acting positions in your organisational chart?

Ms Cross: I would have to look at the individual positions—for example, Ms Pearce, who came to the table earlier, is working on the climate change task force, so there would be someone acting in her job. In some cases it is just that people are off-line. In other cases it will be that we are recruiting to fill positions. Sometimes the person gets promoted and we have acting behind it, so we would have to look at each one.

Senator LUDWIG: So there is no sense of instability in the senior ranks—leaving the ship and creating acting positions?

Ms Cross: No, Senator.

Senator LUDWIG: Maybe you could provide a bit of an analysis of those 20 as you have described.

Ms Cross: I will check how many there are at the moment and certainly we can give some sense of—

Answer:

As at 16 March 2015, there were two acting First Assistant Secretaries (Senior Executive Service Band 2) and 33 acting Assistant Secretaries (Senior Executive Service Band 1).

Employees act in Senior Executive Service (SES) roles for a variety of reasons including when assigned to temporary tasks, covering the absence of a substantive officers while on approved leave, and when a role is genuinely vacant and recruitment action is underway. It would be an unreasonable diversion of employee resources to provide the circumstances for

each acting SES officer as the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's systems do not capture information in this way.