

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: Future Submarine Program

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

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Question:

Senator WONG: The Minister for Defence issued a statement on 20 February 2015.

Dr McCarthy, did PM&C have any role in the preparation of this statement?

Dr McCarthy: In relation to any major announcements—and this was a major announcement—there is as a matter of course consultation by the Department Of Defence with PM&C.

Senator WONG: And I am asking about this statement, so we can focus on it.

Dr McCarthy: We did have interactions with Defence in relation to that statement. I recall that there were general discussions, but as to the exact nature of the consultation, we might just need to check our records. But there were discussions with Defence.

Senator WONG: I am going to want to traverse this. Is there somebody who can check this? I will move to another area and come back to it. This has been an issue of some controversy, so I assume it would not be a surprise that there would be questions asked.

Dr McCarthy: Certainly we have been in discussions with Defence on matters related to the Future Submarine program both prior to and after the statement was made. As to the exact nature of the consultation on the statement itself, we would need to refresh our memories. But we have certainly been in discussions with Defence on an ongoing basis on the matter of the Future Submarine program for some time.

Answer:

The Minister for Defence's statement of 20 February 2015 (titled "Strategic direction of the Future Submarine Program") was managed by the Minister's office and the Department of Defence. While the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was not consulted on the specific wording of this statement, it was consulted on a range of policy and implementation matters related to this announcement in the lead up to 20 February 2015.