

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Prime Minister's VIP catering profile

Senator: Bilyk, Catryna

Question reference number: 206

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 September 2016

Number of pages: 2

Question:

I refer to an edited copy of the Prime Minister's catering preferences when travelling on board his Special Purpose Aircraft, which has been published on the Department of Defence's FOI Disclosure Log at http://www.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/143_1516_Document.pdf.

1. Was the Prime Minister consulted about the proposed release of details about his dining preferences under the FOI Act?
2. Did the Prime Minister object to the release of this information?
3. Was Mrs Turnbull consulted?
4. Did Mrs Turnbull object to the release of this information?
5. Did the Prime Minister's Department provide the Prime Minister, his office or Ms Turnbull with any assistance in responding to these consultations?
6. If so, what assistance did the Department provide? Did the Department assist the Prime Minister or Mrs Turnbull to draft submissions as to why their dining preferences shouldn't be released under FOI? What about the Prime Minister's Office?
7. Did the Department or the Prime Minister's Office obtain any external legal advice about this matter?
8. If so, how much did this cost? Can a copy of any contract notice numbers for contracts published on Austender please be provided?
9. Why did the Prime Minister or Mrs Turnbull object to the release of this information?
10. Who pays for the food and beverages served on board the Prime Minister's VIP aircraft? Is it the Prime Minister personally or the Australian taxpayer?
11. If the Australian taxpayer pays for this catering, why does the Prime Minister believe taxpayers don't deserve to know what he is spending their money on?
12. Did the Prime Minister or his office have any discussions with the Defence Minister or her office about this FOI request?
13. Did the Prime Minister's Department have any communications with the Defence Department about this FOI request?
14. Can a copy of all correspondence in relation to this request:

- Between the PMO and the Department; and
- Between the PMO and the Defence Minister's office; and
- Between the Department and the Defence Department please be provided to the Senate?

I also refer to copies of VIP dining preferences for former Prime Ministers Tony Abbott and Kevin Rudd on the Department of Defence FOI Disclosure Log at http://www.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/196_1314_Documents.pdf. This document indicates that information about Mr Abbott and Mr Rudd's catering preferences was released under FOI.

15. Why won't Prime Minister Turnbull release his dining preferences, given that his predecessors did routinely?

16. Isn't he subject to the same rules as everybody else?

17. Why does he think he's above the rules?

Answer:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) provides administrative support and assistance to the Prime Minister and his office in relation to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth).

On 23 November 2015, the Department of Defence sought PM&C's assistance in consulting the Prime Minister and Mrs Turnbull in relation to the information contained in a Defence Department document that was the subject of an FOI request to that Department.

No external legal advice was obtained by PM&C. PM&C is not aware of any discussions or communications by the Prime Minister's office with the Defence Minister or her office about this matter. Disclosure of the relevant correspondence would be an unreasonable breach of the privacy of individuals referred to in those documents.