

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: Personal communication devices – overseas travel

Senator: Conroy, Stephen

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Question:

Senator CONROY: What advice would you give to a high-ranking PM&C official who indicated that they were going on holiday in China? What advice would you give to that government official about their personal communications devices?

Mr McKinnon: It is not my role to give that advice. But I am always very careful with my own personal devices.

Senator CONROY: Someone is going to have to actually say out loud what the requirements are at some point. We all know what they are, but someone is going to have to put it on the record. You all know what the rules are and you all know what the advice is. Someone is going to have to say it out loud. Assistant Minister, you know the rules. Ms Kelly knows the rules. Mr McKinnon, you know the rules. Ms Wood, you know the rules. So someone is going to have to say it out loud, because the question is germane to the investigation.

Senator McGrath: Perhaps we will take it on notice.

...

CHAIR: I think the officers have said that they know about the protocols in respect of a public servant, but they have taken on notice the protocols with respect to ministers.

Senator CONROY: Would the minister, even on a private trip, be advised to not take his Defence department devices, including his personal phone, his iPad or any other computer? If we are going to sit there and pretend that is not the question, I will put it on the record for you.

CHAIR: The officers have already taken on notice—

Senator CONROY: No, I do not think they did.

CHAIR: They have taken on notice the advice—

Senator CONROY: No; I was asking about his personal devices.

CHAIR: given to ministers in respect to private travel. If you want to ask them—

Senator CONROY: They do not need to take it on notice; they know the answer.

CHAIR: If you want to ask them about advice that may be given to senior public servants, they may be more aware of that.

Senator CONROY: No, they took that on notice.

CHAIR: No, they took on notice advice to ministers

Answer:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) would provide a detailed security briefing to the travelling employee. Information on device security, exploitation methods, security measures and considerations while abroad would be provided. Whole-of-Government resources are used in the development of the briefings, with particular emphasis on Information Security Manual (ISM) controls, as published by the Australian Signals Directorate.

PM&C provides the same advice for both personal and business devices. The ISM controls are amended to reflect personal electronic devices and any personal services or accounts the official may use while travelling. Department officials are reminded that the use of consumer or commercial services for the transmission of classified or sensitive official information is not permitted.