

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Requirements for Annual Reports document

Senator: Senator Nick Xenophon

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Type of Question: Written

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Question:

The Department has on its website a document titled 'Requirements for Annual Reports for Departments, Executive Agencies and FMA ACT Bodies' (http://www.dpmc.gov.au/guidelines/docs/annual_report_requirements_2012-13.pdf)

1. In what financial year was the first version of this document produced?
2. There are mandatory fields required, such as 'Management and Accountability'. Have these fields always been mandatory? If not, what year did they become mandatory?
3. Once the Annual Reports have been presented, does the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have the ability and access to spot audit Annual Reports based on externally supplied information?
4. If not, is the report returned to the Department to be internally scrutinised?

Answer:

The *Requirements for Annual Reports for Departments, Executive Agencies and FMA Act Bodies* (the Annual Report Requirements) are a requirement under the *Public Service Act 1999* (the PS Act). The Annual Report Requirements, in their current form, have been produced since the passage of the PS Act and were released for the first time in 1999-2000.

The Department understands there were previous versions of requirements for annual reporting that pre-dated the current requirements under the PS Act. However these were not arrangements required under the current PS Act.

Under the Annual Report Requirements, there have always been mandatory fields in annual reports in one form or another.

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The PS Act requires each departmental secretary to provide the responsible minister with an annual report prepared in accordance with the requirements approved by the Joint Committee for Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA).

The Department is responsible for preparing the Annual Report Requirements and facilitating the approval of these through the JCPAA. The Department does not conduct 'spot audits' of annual reports once they are presented to Parliament.

The Department notes that, once the annual reports are tabled, the Senate scrutinises annual reports of departments and agencies under Senate Standing Order 25 (20).