

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: G20 funding – role of PMO

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 210

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 July 2014

Number of pages: 2

Question:

With reference to the report in the Daily Telegraph on 28 May 2014 relating to G20 funding:

1. On what date were “department chiefs hauled in by the PM’s office and reminded that they were ‘not heads of state’ and could not use the G20 money for extravagant activities or events”?
2. Which member of the Prime Minister’s staff “hauled in” senior officers of the department?
3. On what date did the Prime Minister ask the department to “hand over its broader budget for vetting by his office?” How was this request conveyed to the department?
4. Can the vetting process of departmental expenditure by the Prime Minister’s staff be outlined?
5. Which staff in the Prime Minister’s office are approving departmental expenditure?
6. On what basis are MOP(S) Act staff approving departmental expenditure?
7. When did the department first become aware of the report?
8. Would the disclosure by a “senior government source” of communications between the Prime Minister’s Office and the department be consistent with part 15 of the Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff which provides that ministerial staff must “maintain appropriate confidentiality about their dealings with their Minister, other Ministers, other Ministerial staff, and APS and Parliamentary Service employees”?

Answer:

1. Departmental officers have not attended a meeting with the Prime Minister’s Office in which a conversation as described occurred prior to 28 May 2014.

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2. See answer to question 1 above.
3. The Secretary requested departmental officials to prepare briefing on 29 May 2014.
4. The Department has briefed the Prime Minister on the G20 budget. While most expenditure was committed by the previous Government, the Department will discuss all proposed significant expenditure on the G20 with the Prime Minister's Office.
5. Delegations for expenditure of Appropriations exist for Departmental Officials only. The Prime Minister's Office is not authorised to approve expenditure.
6. See answer to question 5 above.
7. 28 May 2014.
8. The Special Minister of State is responsible for the employment of staff under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*. The Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff set out the standards expected of ministerial staff. They are available at <http://www.smos.gov.au/resources.statement-of-standards.html>. Questions in relation to the Statement of Standards should be referred to the Department of Finance.