

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: Record of conversation about FOI matter

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 224

Type of Question: Written

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

Number of pages: 1

Question:

With reference to the answer to question on notice 85 from the Additional Estimates round concerning the taking of file notes in connection with an FOI request relating to an Incoming Government Brief:

Why did the department not answer the question, except to confirm that the Deputy Secretary, Ms Kelly, and the Secretary, Dr Watt, did not create a file note of their conversation?

Why did Ms Kelly not create a file note?

Why did the Secretary not create a file note?

Was any other unrecorded advice was provided to the Secretary in relation to this matter?

Do senior officers in PM&C have an obligation to ensure that key decisions and events are recorded in a way that captures the important features of a discussion or decision, presents a faithful and accurate account of the key things that have occurred and can easily be retrieved when needed, consistent with the advice contained in "Note for File: A report on recordkeeping in the Australian Public Service"?

Answer:

The Department does not make a file note of every conversation within the Department. It has always been a matter of judgment whether a record is made of any particular conversation or not. In this instance, neither the Secretary nor Ms Kelly considered a record of their conversation needed to be made.

This is consistent with the record keeping obligations of officers in the Department.