

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: Drafting of the October 2013 Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement

Senator: Senator Sam Dastyari

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

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Question:

Senator DASTYARI: I have put this to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, but the question I am specifically asking you, Dr McCarthy, is that as the formerly titled National Security Adviser, and now called Associate Secretary, as the person who functions in the role of National Security Adviser, were you involved in the drafting of the communique or were you advised of the context and the text of that?

Dr McCarthy: I was not, and it is not always the case by any means that the foreign minister or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would in every case consult. Sometimes that happens and sometimes it does not. I can take on notice the matter of consultation.

Senator DASTYARI: There are two separate questions. One question is: what was the consultation between DFAT and the Prime Minister's office regarding it? I accept that that is a matter for DFAT. The second question was whether the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and you in particular, were involved in the wording of the communique? I think the answer you are giving to me is that you cannot answer the first part, because that is a matter for DFAT and the Prime Minister's office, and questions should be directed to them, which is fair enough—but you will take that on notice. The second part being that your answer is: no, you were not personally involved in providing the advice or in the drafting of the communique.

Dr McCarthy: I do not think it is appropriate for me to take the first question on notice, because it goes to dealing between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Prime Minister's office.

Senator DASTYARI: Fine.

Dr McCarthy: I can take on notice the issue of any consultation in relation to that matter with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

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Senator DASTYARI: But, while you are taking on notice the question of any consultation, you are saying that you yourself were not consulted?

Answer:

The Department was not consulted on the draft.