

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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Question:

Senator DASTYARI: If your group was not involved in the text for the joint statement were referred to in Bali, are you aware of any involvement of the Prime Minister's staff in that text? I am asking whether you are aware of any involvement.

Dr McCarthy: I will take that question on notice.

Senator DASTYARI: Does that mean you are not aware or you are aware and not sure if you should tell me?

Dr McCarthy: I do not have the details in front of me.

Senator WONG: Was she there?

Senator DASTYARI: No, Dr McCarthy was not there. You arrived after the statement was issued—correct?

Dr McCarthy: That is my recollection.

Senator DASTYARI: You are not aware of whether there was a role played by the office of the Prime Minister in the drafting of that text—is that correct?

Dr McCarthy: I would need to check those details for you.

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Senator DASTYARI: Let us go to the case at hand. We are talking about the joint statement in Bali that was produced prior to your arrival and the Prime Minister's arrival in October last year. In that specific instance, your evidence is that you personally were not involved and you are unaware of the group's involvement—but you will confirm all that. You are not saying whether or not you know whether or not the Prime Minister's office had involvement or not, so obviously you do not know whether they did.

Dr McCarthy: I am also conscious that I am not sure that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet should necessarily be answering questions that are about the

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Prime Minister's office's involvement in issues. I just want to be certain that whatever information we give you is accurate.

Senator DASTYARI: If it is a question about the Prime Minister's office, who should I be asking?

Senator Abetz: Me, and I will take that on notice, because I do not know. It would not be surprising to me if the Prime Minister's office was in fact involved, because in our democracy if you left it all to the officials there would be no room, reason or rationale for the Prime Minister to exist, because the department would do it all, or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would do it all. It would not surprise me if there was that cross-pollination between the PMO and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Answer:

The Department is not aware of any involvement by the Prime Minister's office.