

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2016

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Security works spending**

Question: **1**

Hansard Reference **p 4; 5 May 2016**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 17 June 2016

Senator WONG: I am going to refer to questions on notice 3407 and 3408. My question may be from the last round or maybe it was a chamber question on notice to you, Mr President. I am sorry; I cannot recall. I was asking about the expenditure on internal and external security works in the ministerial wing. I was told that between September 2014 and March 2016, just under \$11.3 million has been spent by the government on security works in the ministerial wing. I also asked a question about the total spend across the building on security works, and that was \$16.3 million. That is around 70 per cent of the allocation on security measures only in the ministerial wing.

Can I first ask: why was the decision made to allocate such a large proportion of the security works budget only to the ministerial wing?

Mr Stefanic: Perhaps I could take that on notice.

Senator WONG: You're kidding!

CHAIR: The question has been taken on notice.

Senator WONG: All right. I will explore it. Who made the decision to allocate 70 per cent of the security works to be done on the parliament to the ministerial wing? Why is everybody looking down?

The President: If I could just add: there are some sensitivities in relation to security measures. That is the first issue. Secondly, there have been moneys not spent that had been allocated in the previous financial year, or the current financial year and the previous financial year, and I am just wondering whether that might be a distortion in percentage.

Senator WONG: Well, they are your answers, Mr President.

The President: I realise that, Senator Wong. However, that is just a snapshot at one particular point in time. Can we just consider that, hold that question and maybe come back to you, hopefully in the course of the DPS segment?

Senator WONG: Sure.

The President: Otherwise, if we cannot get a definitive answer, it will certainly be a question—as the secretary has indicated—on notice.

Senator WONG: I am happy to come back later today. We all know we are going to have an election and we will have an argument in the chamber about whether or not we have questions on notice, and then we will just have to come back if we are in opposition still and ask the questions. If we are in government, I suppose you will actually tell me. But these are pretty simple questions about spend that has already been answered. I do not want to compromise any security issues, but you have told me we spent \$16 million in this time period—18 months—and over two-thirds of it, 70 per cent of it, was spent in the ministerial wing. No-one seems to be able to tell me why. All I am asking is: who made the decision? Surely someone can tell me that.

The President: Ultimately, the decision has been made by the Presiding Officers, upon advice. I just want to get the actual figures in front of me before we start answering the question.

Senator WONG: So you propose to come back later in the day?

The President: Maybe in 10 minutes. I do not know.

Senator WONG: All right. It is questions 3407 and 3408.

Answer

Why was the decision made to allocate such a large proportion of the security works budget only to the ministerial wing? Who made the decision to allocate 70 per cent of the security works to be done on the parliament to the ministerial wing?

The amount available is being spent across APH. The budget is for both physical hardening and updating certain electronics packages that assist in the overarching security of the precinct. The expenditure between September 2014 and March 2016 involved a large proportion of expenditure for the Ministerial Wing as the gatehouse, fence and bollards at the southern entry to Parliament House were significant elements of the works undertaken in this period. Security works in other areas of Parliament House are being undertaken. The programming of works was approved by the Presiding Officers, and the external works were approved by the Parliament.