

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

### Answers to Questions on Notice

#### Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: PSS competency management training

Question: 5

Hansard Reference p 12-13; 5 May 2016

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

**CHAIR:** I will go to one more issue. I want to talk about competency management training. Part 17 of question on notice 182 states that 'the use of batons is not taught in CMT'. Is that statement accurate?

**Ms Croke:** That is exactly what it says. 'The use of batons is not taught.'

**CHAIR:** Are you standing by that evidence?

**Mr Barnes:** To my knowledge, there is no training in the use of batons for PSS officers at this time.

**CHAIR:** This is part of the problem. There are a lot of people who read these answers to questions on notice, and some of them decide they want to contact me. Then they say things like: 'In December of 2015, we were shown and trained in the use of batons and plastic slip-tie handcuffs. This is not the first time it's been used. It's been done for a number of years.' These are very interested people. Another person said, 'Defence tactics module included rudimentary introduction to the use of batons and handcuffs.' It is all remarkably consistent; they are saying the evidence provided in that answer to a question on notice is not accurate. I can keep going. I have more. Do you want me to keep quoting the same sorts of things? I think you get the drift.

**Mr Barnes:** I get the drift.

**CHAIR:** So who do I believe?

**Senator WONG:** Maybe the department might need to go away and make further investigations. I am not trying to be obstructive.

**CHAIR:** I know you are not trying to be obstructive.

**Senator WONG:** I think the problem appears to be that people at one level have a different understanding than people of a different level. Maybe investigations ought to be undertaken.

**CHAIR:** I anticipated these sorts of issues, which is why I indicated prior to this that I had some concerns about elements of the responses to questions on notice. I have tried to be as straight up as I possibly can. I am not interested in causing traps. I just want to make sure, because of the repeated difficulties we have had in this committee with elements of DPS and the evidence, that we can rely on what is put to us. Who do I believe?

**Mr Barnes:** I am not in a position to respond to that question. I would like to make sure that we can get an accurate response.

**Senator McKENZIE:** In the army of people behind you would there be someone who might actually be able to answer Senator Bernardi's questions?

**Mr Barnes:** I think that at this point in time it would be appropriate to take the question on notice and make sure we get an accurate response for the committee.

#### Answer

The Department's response to Question on Notice No 182 requires further clarification in relation to the 'use of batons' in competency management training.

During a training module with hand held metal detectors, PSS officers are taught a technique to defend themselves in the event of a knife attack by the person being scanned. A padded plastic training baton is used as a prop to simulate a hand held metal detector. Because the term 'baton' is used to describe the training aid, this training could be confused with offensive baton training. In relation to this element of the training, the training provider has advised:

Whilst this may appear to have some similarities with baton techniques, the defensive posture adopted and the type of defensive counter-strikes used in the HHMD (Hand Held Metal Detector) training are not used in standard baton training packages.

The original response to Question on Notice No. 182 should have more accurately reflected that a training technique could be misconstrued as baton training.