

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 18-22 November 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Topic:** Heads of departments

**Senator:** Senator Sam Dastyari

**Question reference number:** 3

**Type of Question:** Hansard

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 17 January 2014

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

Senator DASTYARI: Following on from that again, for my understanding of the procedure: did the Prime Minister request those reports, or were those reports offered?

Ms Kelly: Senator, again, the statute was complied with. They were provided in accordance with the statute.

Senator DASTYARI: Sure. Nobody here is implying or suggestion in any way, shape or form that the statute was not complied with. I am not saying that there was a breach of the act here. That is not my suggestion. There are many ways you can comply with this act, and my question is: was this complied with because the Prime Minister asked the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for a report to be produced about three departmental secretaries who were later terminated?

Senator Abetz: All right. We will have to take that on notice.

Senator DASTYARI: Okay. So I might rephrase that; I will be even more specific if you are taking it on notice. Did the Prime Minister have a conversation with the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet requesting that reports be produced terminating these three departmental heads? If the Prime Minister did not, were the reports offered up by Mr Ian Watt, the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet? And if it was neither of those, who had the conversation with Mr Ian Watt requesting that these reports be produced?

Senator Abetz: All right. That is in the Hansard now. We will take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER: Just so that we are clear, neither Ms Cross or Ms Kelly, or you, Minister, can say where the initiative came from. Surely it was the Prime Minister's initiative. I don't think to say that is a particularly controversial thing, given—and I understand section 58 of the act has been mentioned, sure, but as a starting point—

Senator Abetz: I do not know.

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Senator WONG: And neither do the officers?

Senator Abetz: That is why I need to take it on notice, and I am advised by both Ms Kelly and Ms Cross that they do not know either.

**Answer:**

As part of the incoming government briefing process, the incoming Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP had a number of conversations on a broad range of issues with the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Dr Ian Watt AO between 8 September 2013 and 18 September 2013.