

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

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Type of Question: Hansard

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator WONG: Does the report identify an officer other than the secretary?

Ms Cross: I think we would have to take that on notice as well.

Senator Abetz: The officials tell me they have not seen the report. As a result, it is difficult for them—

Ms Cross: As a general statement, though, issues of this nature are held fairly tightly ahead of an announcement. So there may well have been no other name on the brief. We would have to check.

Senator DASTYARI: We are not talking about a lengthy report here. We are talking about what, I imagine, at most would not be going over a couple of pages. The report could not be that far away. It is something that surely somebody here would have access to very quickly. I understand that you may not, for other reasons, want to have a discussion about the details of the report. But some of these questions about this report, I think, could very reasonably be answered if you were able to see the report. Are you telling me that no-one here has actually seen the report?

Ms Cross: We were not specifically involved at the time, so that is correct. But we have said we will take that on notice for you.

Senator DASTYARI: My question—and Senator Bernardi may be in a better position to ask about this than I am—is: is that something that somebody here could get a hold of now? I just do not understand. We are talking about a two- or maybe three-page report that goes to the effect of sacking three very senior public servants and terminating the head of the department. We can have a debate about whether or not you feel it is appropriate or not to release the report. I cannot see why it would not be released, but that is a separate matter. But you are telling us you cannot answer any questions about the report because you have not seen the report. So my question is: why can't we get a copy of the report here for you now?

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Ms Cross: We will take that on notice for you.

Answer:

The provision of the report would disclose personal information and breach the privacy of the individuals concerned.