

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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Question:

Senator DASTYARI: Going back to what we were talking about earlier, I assume calculations were done on what the costs of terminating department secretaries were. Is there a calculation on the cost of the three terminations?

Ms Kelly: I cannot answer that question but, again, we can take that on notice.

Ms Cross: That is one we do not know the answer to, so we will check it for you.

Senator DASTYARI: So on notice you can get back to us on what were the total financial costs including salary payments, superannuation, leave entitlements et cetera associated with the termination of the three departmental secretaries. There would be some figure floating around to that effect?

Ms Cross: What we said was that we do not know if there is that figure, but we will take that on notice for you.

Senator DASTYARI: But you would have to pay it out, so there would have to be a figure, wouldn't there?

Ms Cross: You would imagine so.

Senator DASTYARI: And that figure can be made available to us. How long will it take?

Senator Abetz: I am thinking out aloud as to whether that is something we would seek to disclose on the public record. Allow us to take that on notice. On the face of it, everybody knows what secretaries get paid, and some of us ministers get quite upset about what they get paid in comparison. That aside, I wonder whether there are potentially some privacy issues. But allow us to take it on notice. I would have thought that, overall, chances are that it should be allowed, but I stand to be corrected.

Senator DASTYARI: I guess the question, just to be specific, is: when you terminate a secretary, are they being paid out the remainder of their contract—once we see the

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figure, that will be clear—or are they just given a redundancy? How does it structurally work on that level? The supplementary question, if there is one, is: once a secretary has been terminated, is that deemed a redundancy? In the case of one of the departmental secretaries, it involved the merging of two departments, if I am correct, and that is to do with the secretary of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and I think there was a bit of a restructure as well. Once the secretary gets terminated, do they get paid out? How does it all work?

Ms Cross: We will check for you. I think there may be some information on the public record about what happens with secretaries' remuneration and it relates to the length of time remaining under their contract. We will check that for you.

Answer:

The entitlements of a Secretary whose appointment has been terminated or where a Department is abolished are set out in Part 5 of the Determination by the Remuneration Tribunal *Departmental Secretaries-Classification Structure and Terms and Conditions 2013/14*.