

**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:** Governance Committee

**Senator:** Senator the Hon Penny Wong

**Question reference number:** 11

**Type of Question:** Hansard

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

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

Senator WONG: Has the governance committee met?

Ms Spence: We do not talk about the details of the number of meetings that have been held.

Senator WONG: I am not sure that is correct.

Ms Spence: Other than the overarching numbers that are provided in the annual report.

Senator WONG: I do not think that is right. I think Senate committees can request. We cannot ask what was discussed—sometimes we can—but it is perfectly appropriate to ask when a meeting occurred. I think you will find that has been asked and answered. Has the governance committee met to date?

Ms Spence: I have to take that on notice.

Senator WONG: On what basis?

Ms Spence: I do not have the information with me at the moment, I am sorry.

Senator WONG: Someone from PM&C attends the meetings, do they not? They take notes at the meeting.

Ms Spence: They take notes—yes.

Senator WONG: Has the governance committee met?

Ms Spence: I will take that on notice.

Senator WONG: On what basis?

Ms Spence: Because I do not have the information in front of me.

Senator WONG: Does someone have the information? If there is going to be a claim, there is a process to go through. It is a very simple question about whether the committee has met or not.

Ms Spence: We will find that information and get back to you, Senator.

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Senator FAULKNER: Can I point out to you, Minister, that historically, regardless of the political nature of the government of the day, cabinet processes, including issues such as committee meeting times and the like, have been regularly canvassed at committees and answers have been provided. It is accepted that the content of discussions and the like of cabinet-in-confidence—I do not make a major point of that, but, given Ms Spence's earlier comment, I think it warrants that minor clarification.

Ms Cross: We are happy to take that on notice. I think our recollection is that we give statistics in total for cabinet and its committees but that we do not normally break it down by committee. But we will check that for you.

**Answer:** Yes.