

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: Charter letters

Senator: Senator the Hon John Faulkner

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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 FAULKNER: You mentioned charter letters—I might come back to that—and you said you had received your charter letter. Fair enough; that is good. Is it the view of the government that charter letters can be made public?

Senator Abetz: I will have to take that on notice. I am not sure whether they have been in the past or not.

Ms Cross: It is not normal practice to make them public, Senator.

Senator FAULKNER: To be fair, Ms Cross, I don't know if there is a "normal practice" in relation to this. However, if you perhaps could take on notice my request for the provision of charter letters. I can probably only do so at this committee because they are signed by the Prime Minister for all relevant members of the Executive. I am certainly interested in those relevant to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. I appreciate that the Prime Minister does not write himself a charter letter. I am well aware of that. However, he does sign the charter letters, doesn't he?

Ms Cross: That is the standard practice. I am not aware of them ever having been released in the past, but we will check.

Senator FAULKNER: If you could take that on notice I would appreciate it.

Ms Cross: We will.

Answer:

Charter letters have been provided to Cabinet ministers, and ministers assisting and parliamentary secretaries within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. They set out the priorities to be met in this term of Government and ask for a number of matters to be brought forward for Cabinet consideration.

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It is a longstanding convention before this Committee that the nature and content of those priorities is not disclosed to maintain Cabinet confidentiality.