

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 19-23 October 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: UNFCCC Taskforce – Bureau of Meteorology

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 113

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 4 December 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

When was the UNFCCC Taskforce in the department formed?

When was it disbanded?

What was its function?

How many staff were part of the taskforce?

Did the department ask Mr Abbott to omit reference to the bureau from the terms of reference for the department's UNFCCC taskforce?

Can the committee be provided with all versions of the terms of reference for the department's UNFCCC Taskforce terms of reference?

Did the so-called "review of the temperature data set" ordered by Mr Abbott happen.

Answer:

The UNFCCC Taskforce was formed in December 2014 and disbanded after the announcement of Australia's 2030 emissions reduction target in August 2015.

The Taskforce's function is set out in its terms of reference at:

<http://www.dpmc.gov.au/taskforces/unfccc/terms-reference>.

The Taskforce had 12 staff, including seconded staff from the then Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Environment, Industry and Science and The Treasury.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) advised the former Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, to agree with the Minister for the Environment's suggestion that references to the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) be removed from the UNFCCC Taskforce's terms of reference as a process to review the BOM's dataset was already underway. This is outlined in documents released in a freedom of information request, available at: <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/foi-log/FOI-2014-206%20-%20Documents%20for%20publication.pdf>

It is not PM&C's practice to provide working documents, such as draft terms of reference.

A review of the BOM's Australian Climate Observations Reference Network was undertaken by a Technical Advisory Forum established by the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Bob Baldwin MP. The first annual report of the Forum is available online at:

http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/change/acorn-sat/documents/2015_TAF_report.pdf. Further questions on the report and implementation of recommendations should be directed to the BOM.