

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: Joint Commonwealth and Tasmanian Economic Council

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 118

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

With reference to the statement in the department's annual report that "We supported the Prime Minister in his role as co-Chair of the joint Commonwealth and Tasmanian Economic Council in line with efforts to boost Tasmanian economic and jobs growth":

1. How did the department support the Prime Minister's role.
2. What costs were associated with support for the Prime Minister and the council.
3. On what dates did the council meet in 2014-15.
4. Who attended each meeting.
5. Can the agenda papers for each meeting be provided.
6. What outcomes are attributed to the council's work for 2014-15.
7. Has Mr Turnbull chaired a meeting of the council.
8. When and where is the next meeting.
9. Is it Mr Turnbull's intention to chair each meeting.

Answer:

1. Consistent with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's (PM&C) role, briefing was provided to the Prime Minister prior to each meeting. The Department also worked with other Commonwealth departments, the Tasmanian Government and

business members to establish meeting agendas, input to agenda papers and take forward actions from Council meetings.

2. The Treasury provides secretariat support to the Council. The Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division within PM&C has an Agriculture and Regional Development policy team whose role includes monitoring implementation of the Tasmanian Economic Growth Plan and supporting the Prime Minister on the Council. Officials also travel to attend Council meetings (as observers) and other preparatory meetings in Tasmania. Costs are borne by Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division's normal operational budget and not itemised separately.

3-5. Information on Council meetings, including; meeting dates, attendees and records is available at <http://treasury.gov.au/jctec>.

6. In accordance with the Terms of Reference (available at <http://treasury.gov.au/jctec>), the Council provided advice on a range of potential competitive reforms to drive the Tasmanian economy. Key matters discussed in 2014-15 are set out in each record of meeting and include:

- The Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme – the Government announced on 13 March 2015 that it will strengthen Tasmanian business, investment and jobs through a \$203 million expansion of the Scheme;
- Tasmanian Irrigation Tranche II - the Government announced on 19 February 2015 \$60 million towards the Tranche II irrigation schemes.

7. No. The Council last met on 7 August 2015.

8. Details for the next meeting are still being settled.

9. The Prime Minister and Mr Dale Elphinstone co-chair the Council.