

**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:** Ministry List

**Senator:** Senator Catryna Bilyk

**Question reference number:** 264

**Type of question:** Written

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

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

- a) Were the 12 so-called “Assistant Ministers” sworn-in as Parliamentary Secretaries or “Assistant Ministers” by the Governor-General?
- b) What does the Governor-General’s Commission say?
- c) How can the Prime Minister unilaterally decide to deem them to be “Assistant Ministers”, when this is contrary to the Governor-General’s commission?
- d) Will the Prime Minister be amending the MOS Act to reflect his preferred approach?
- e) Do the so-called “Assistant Ministers” receive a Minister’s pay packet or a Parliamentary Secretary’s pay packet?
- f) Do they have a suite in the Ministerial Wing of the Parliament?
- g) Do they have a Minister’s staffing allocation of a Parliamentary Secretary’s allocation?
- h) Will they make themselves available to answer questions during Question Time?
- i) Will they have primary responsibility for administering any legislation?
- j) If they are clearly Parliamentary Secretaries in all substantive respects, why does the Prime Minister refer to them as “Assistant Ministers”?
- k) Was this a tactic by the Prime Minister to spread the rewards of office far and wide amongst those who backed him when he toppled Tony Abbott as leader of the Liberal Party in a backroom political coup?

**Answer:**

- a) Parliamentary Secretaries.
- b) The instruments of appointment for Assistant Ministers in the Turnbull Ministry appoint each of them to administer a Department or Departments of State, pursuant to section 64 of the Constitution, and direct each of them to hold the office or offices of Parliamentary Secretary to a specified Minister, pursuant to section 65 of the Constitution.
- c) Using the title of Assistant Minister does not affect the appointment made by the Governor-General.
- d) No.
- e) Assistant Ministers receive the remuneration and other allowances of a Parliamentary Secretary.
- f) No.
- g) Assistant Ministers receive the personal staffing allocation determined by the Prime Minister.
- h) No.  
The Senate adopted an order on 3 September 1991 which provides that:
  - a Parliamentary Secretary may not be asked or answer questions which may be put to ministers under standing order 72(1).House of Representatives Standing Order 98 provides that:
  - during Question Time, a Member may orally ask a question of a Minister (but not a Parliamentary Secretary, including Assistant Ministers who are Parliamentary Secretaries), without notice and for immediate response.
- i) All Ministers, including those holding the office or offices of Parliamentary Secretary and known as Assistant Ministers, are appointed by the Governor-General to administer a Department or Departments of State. Legislation listed under each Department of State in the Administrative Arrangements Order is administered by all Ministers of State administering that Department.
- j) and k)  
When the Prime Minister announced changed Ministerial arrangements on 20 September 2015, he indicated that Parliamentary Secretaries would be known as Assistant Ministers to better reflect their roles and constitutional status.