

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: Change in Prime Minister

Senator: Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig

Question reference number: 323

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

After the change in Prime Minister in September 2015, it was widely reported that it took the former Prime Minister (Mr Abbott) and his staff quite some time to vacate the Prime Ministerial office. It was also reported that during this time, the New Prime Minister (Mr Turnbull) operated out of his old office (Communication Minister's office). One such article is available here: <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/office-politics-tony-abbotts-staff-slow-to-leave-their-old-digs-20150917-gjpada.html>.

The following questions relate to these reports:

1. When was the PM's office made available to Mr Turnbull?
2. When was the Department informed that the PM's office had been vacated?
 - a) Was the department informed prior to the office becoming available
 - b) How was the department informed?
 - c) Who informed the department?
 - d) Could you please provide a copy of any emails, memos or other documents in the chain with the department regarding the vacation of the office?
3. When was Mr Turnbull informed that the office was available to him?
 - a) How was the Prime Minister (or his office) informed?
 - b) Who informed the Prime Minister (or his office)?
 - c) Could you please provide a copy of any emails, memos or other documents in the chain with the department regarding the vacation of the office?
- 4) Did the department provide any additional furniture, equipment, IT, etc to Prime Minister Turnbull or his office to use in the Communication Minister's office between his election to the leadership and his move into the Prime Minister's office? If yes, please provide a list of items and include:
 - a) Was the item in stock or purchased for this purpose?

- b) Value of item.
 - c) What was the need for the item?
 - d) Was it requested by the Prime Minister's office? If no, then who requested it?
5. What support was provided by PMC to Mr Turnbull and his office to make the Communication Minister's office viable for Prime Ministerial duties during this period?
6. What IT arrangements were in place during this time to allow Mr Turnbull's office access to the Prime Ministerial IT system?
- a) Please provide a detailed cost break down of these arrangements.
 - b) Were there any limitations that prohibited Mr Turnbull accessing certain IT systems during this time? If yes, please detail.
7. What support was provided to Mr Abbott and his office during this period to assist with the transition?

Answer:

- 1 The Prime Minister's suite was vacated on 18 September 2015. It was available to the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, on Sunday 20 September 2015, following cleaning by Department of Parliamentary Services staff on Saturday, 19 September.
- 2&3 Timing to vacate the suite was negotiated between the incoming and outgoing offices.
- 4 The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) did not provide any additional items for use in the office used by Prime Minister Turnbull prior to his move to Prime Minister's suite on 20 September.
- 5 A PM&C Departmental Liaison Officer was based in the office used by Prime Minister Turnbull prior to his move to Prime Minister's suite on 20 September. No other arrangements were required.
- 6(a) Access to the PM&C email system was provided to the Prime Minister and to a small number of his staff from 17 September. PM&C systems are not set up to identify costs over the period of the transition. It would be an unreasonable diversion of resources to do so.
- 6(b) IT equipment was provided to the Prime Minister and office staff following occupancy of the Prime Minister's suite by the incoming office.
- 7 Consistent with support provided to outgoing Prime Ministers, boxes for packing and secure document shredders and bins were provided and some IT equipment was kept for a limited period following the transition.