

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: FOI/2015/074

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 90

Type of question: written

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1 Which departmental officers were assigned responsibility as the decision-maker on the FOI request designated by the department as FOI/2015/074 related to taxpayer-funded purchases of alcohol for former Prime Minister Mr Abbott.

In relation to each decision-maker, for what time-periods did they undertake that role.

2 On what dates did the department communicate with former Prime Minister Mr Abbott or his office in relation to the FOI request.

3 Did the secretary of the department seek, or receive, advice about the handling of the request by the department. If so, on what date/s.

4 With reference to evidence by Ms Spence on 19 October 2015 that the Prime Minister's Office was a "third party" to the request: On what basis were staff in the Prime Minister's Office a third party to a request seeking invoices for payment made by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Answer:

1 As outlined in the response to Senate Parliamentary Question on Notice number 2589, the original decision-maker was the Assistant Secretary, Ministerial and Parliamentary Support Branch. However, due to operational reasons, the First Assistant Secretary, Ministerial Support Division, became the decision-maker from 17 September 2015

2 The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) provided weekly progress reports to the office of the former Prime Minister regarding FOI matters where consultation was required.

- 3 On 15 October 2015, the Secretary was briefed on the handling of the request. The Secretary is also kept informed of the progress for all FOI requests to the Department as per the Department's FOI business rules—available on the Department's website at http://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/pmc/FOI_Business_Rules_Dec_2014.pdf.
- 4 The Prime Minister's office are kept informed of FOI requests made to the Department across several stages of the process in accordance with the Department's FOI business rules