

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Group 3

Program 1.6

Question No. 41

Senator Rhiannon asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February 2014:

Senator RHIANNON: Mr Wilkins or Senator Brandis, could you give us an update on where the Open Government Partnership is up to, and Australia's approach to enter this?

Mr Wilkins: That was actually for this morning, I think.

Senator RHIANNON: So you cannot—

Mr Wilkins: All I can tell you is that it is progressing and there has been some discussion amongst departments. There is some issue about which department should ultimately be charged with taking it forward, but that is about all I know of the top of my head.

Senator RHIANNON: But wasn't it that we were about to become part of the Open Government Partnership?

Senator Brandis: I can give you some information about this. Australia announced its intention to join the Open Government Partnership on 22 May last year. There have since been three interagency meetings to discuss progress, including the requirements of an action plan. One of those meetings was held before the elections, on 17 July, and the other two have been held since the election, on 29 October and on 5 November. So the action plan is in development. I hope that helps.

Senator RHIANNON: So can we meet the deadline? I understand the meeting of the Open Government Partnership is in April 2014. Will we meet the deadline with regard to submitting our national action plan?

Mr Wilkins : My understanding is that it is not a deadline, actually.

Senator RHIANNON: Much of the material you read—with due respect—certainly presents an expectation that we were going to enter at that April meeting and that the national action plan is not ready. If that is not the case, it would be very good to get that on the public record. That is what I am trying to explore.

Mr Wilkins: As I said, we had people up here this morning to answer these questions. I did not realise it was going to be raised this afternoon, so I suggest we take it on notice.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The membership of the Open Government Partnership by Australia is under consideration by the Government.