

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

**Group 2**

**Program 1.3**

**Question No. 118**

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

- 1) How did the Attorney-General satisfy himself that Mr Wilson had 'appropriate qualifications, knowledge or experience' to be appointed Human Rights Commissioner?
  
- 2) How did the Attorney-General satisfy himself that Mr Wilson had 'appropriate qualifications, knowledge or experience' to be appointed Human Rights Commissioner?
  
- 3) Does Mr Wilson have any legal qualification or experience? What are Mr Wilson's formal qualifications in the field of human rights?
  
- 4) What are Mr Wilson's formal qualifications in the field of human rights?
  
- 5) The Attorney-General indicated during Estimates that Mr Wilson's appointment was conducted under 2.6.6 of the APS Commission's Merit and Transparency Guidelines.
  
- 6) What were the 'special circumstances' which made 2.6.6 applicable to Mr Wilson's appointment?
  
- 7) Was, as 2.6.6 requires, the Prime Minister's approval given for Mr Wilson's appointment without a full, competitive selection process?

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

- 1) The Attorney-General satisfied himself on the basis of his knowledge of Mr Wilson's qualifications, knowledge and experience.
  
- 2) The Attorney-General satisfied himself on the basis of his knowledge of Mr Wilson's qualifications, knowledge and experience.
  
- 3) Mr Wilson was until recently a Policy Director at the Institute of Public Affairs, a position that he had held since 2008. He is a regular guest speaker and media commentator on international and Australian public policy. He has a Masters of Diplomacy and Trade from Monash University, a Diploma of Business from the Victorian Qualifications Authority and a Bachelor of Arts (Policy Studies and Politics) from Monash University. Mr Wilson has published and broadcast widely on the topics of personal freedom, liberal democratic values and the rule of law.

- 4) Please see the answer to Question 3.
- 5) This is a statement rather than a question. Please see the answers to Questions 6 and 7 which cover this topic.
- 6) Part 2.6.6 of the *Australian Public Service Commission Merit and Transparency Guidelines* permits an expedited appointment when an appointment is urgent or a sufficiently eminent candidate has been identified so as to make a full selection process unnecessary. The Human Rights Commissioner position had been vacant since May 2012. The Government considered Mr Wilson to be a sufficiently eminent candidate for the role on the basis of his qualifications, knowledge and experience, so as to make a full selection process unnecessary.
- 7) Yes. The requirements of Part 2.6.6 were complied with in all respects.