

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

Group 3

Question No. 8

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

Senator LUDWIG: Thank you. Mr Fricker, can you remind me whether you hold cabinet documents and cabinet minutes?

Mr Fricker: That is correct.

Senator LUDWIG: And you hold them in a secure location in the National Archives?

Mr Fricker: Once they are deposited in the Archives from the controlling agency, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, then we hold them in secure—

Senator LUDWIG: What date have they been deposited up to, if that makes sense?

Mr Fricker: I will have to take on notice the years of cabinet documents that have already been deposited with the Archives. That was the question you asked?

Senator LUDWIG: Yes.

Mr Fricker: I will have to take that on notice. The requirement of the Archives Act is that, within 15 years of the end of their administrative use, they are deposited with the Archives. So, after administrative use of records, there is a lag of some years before they are in fact, deposited with us. So I will have to take that on notice, Senator.

Senator LUDWIG: Is it usual for it to be around 10 or 15 years? I am asking you to search your mind.

Mr Fricker: It is across the board with Commonwealth records, but with cabinet records I would have to take that on notice and just make sure that I answer that question

Senator LUDWIG: And you are perfectly right about that. So, to your recollection, there have not been any cabinet documents of recent origin—the last 12 months or two years or three years—that have been deposited. The previous government's records would not be with you at the moment; they would remain with PM&C?

Mr Fricker: I believe so. That is correct.

Senator LUDWIG: Thank you.

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

Cabinet documents and minutes up to 21 February 1996 (to the end of the Keating Government) have been deposited with the Archives.

Yes – usually at about 15 years.