

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

Group: 2

Program: Other Agency

Question No. AE15/005

Senator O'Sullivan asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February 2015:

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Thank you. As at 3rd December 2013, Professor Triggs, had your commission experienced a ceasing of the delivery or sharing of information by then? Had you established that that was having an impact on the commission, that information previously provided you by the department of immigration was now not being provided to you?

Prof. Triggs: That is my understanding, yes.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Okay. Could you tell me what areas of information had once been provided that were now no longer provided?

Prof. Triggs: I would be very happy to provide you with that information on notice.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Okay. Do you have any independent thought on what this constriction was? Do you yourself remember thinking that the landscape had changed?

Prof. Triggs: As I said a moment ago, I will take that on notice and consult staff to see the extent to which they were observing a failure to provide information that we had traditionally been receiving.

CHAIR: We might have to leave it there, Senator O'Sullivan. You can obviously come back later on. Senator Bilyk.

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

The Commission has always maintained a good working relationship with the Department of Immigration. In the last quarter of 2013 the Commission did notice that information was taking longer to obtain from the Department and at times information was not being provided.

Examples of challenges obtaining information include the following:

- During the drafting of the snapshot report the Commission had difficulty obtaining information to publish when requested.
- The Commission used to receive confidential weekly immigration detention statistics. On 8 October 2013 the Commission was advised that 'the Department is no longer publishing this document externally'.
- The Commission also had difficulty in arranging a regular teleconference to discuss offshore processing. There was no response to this request.