

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

Group: 2

Program: 1.1

Question: BE14/036

Senator SINGH asked the following question at the hearing on 26-29 May 2014:

Senator SINGH: I tried to ask this question earlier when the minister was not here, and I do not think the officers could answer it, and I do not think you were there either, Mr Wilkins. It is in relation to the Marrakesh treaty. Are you familiar with the Marrakesh treaty, minister?

Senator Brandis: Yes.

Senator SINGH: It is currently open for signatures until 26 June this year. It has now been signed, I understand, by 65 countries, including the UK and the US. When will the Commonwealth government sign this treaty?

Senator Brandis: That is really a matter for my colleague Ms Bishop, but I will take your question on notice.

Senator SINGH: I actually thought it was part of the A-G's Department. Am I incorrect?

Senator Brandis: It may be, but I—

Senator SINGH: Mr Wilkins?

Senator Brandis: I would not be providing an answer like that in relation to Australia becoming a party to a treaty without at least first consulting my colleague the Minister for Foreign Affairs, so I will take the question on notice.

Senator SINGH: You are aware of this treaty?

Senator Brandis: I am advised that the treaty is open for signature on 26 June.

Senator SINGH: That is what I just said to you.

Senator Brandis: That is not what I heard you say; perhaps I misheard you. In any event, I will take the question on notice.

Senator SINGH: Do you have a view on signing the treaty, as a member of the cabinet?

Senator Brandis: I said I would take the question on notice.

Senator SINGH: I think it is an important part of your portfolio. So I want to know whether or not you are supportive of this treaty.

Senator Brandis: I am sorry, but these matters are government decisions, and I want to talk to my colleague the Minister for Foreign Affairs, so I will take the question on notice.

Senator SINGH: What is the Marrakesh treaty, Minister?

Senator Brandis: I have told you that all questions in relation to this treaty I will take on notice.

Senator SINGH: I am asking you what the Marrakesh treaty is.

Senator Brandis: I have taken the question on notice.

Senator SINGH: Do you not know what the Marrakesh treaty is?

Senator Brandis: I have already answered that question.

Senator SINGH: No, you have not. I am asking you what the Marrakesh treaty is.

CHAIR: I heard the minister say three times that he would take it on notice, which he is entitled to do. Do you have any other questions?

Senator SINGH: Senator Brandis, do you have anything else to add to your answer? Obviously not.

Senator Brandis: Perhaps you are having trouble hearing tonight. I said I would take the question on notice.

Senator SINGH: That is all right. Clearly you do not understand the Marrakesh treaty.

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

On 23 June 2014, Australia signed the *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled*.