

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 22 May 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE17/008) - AAT decision leaked to Herald Sun - Department - Internal Product (DIBP)

Senator Watt, Murray (L&CA 25) asked:

Senator PRATT: Was it the minister who brought this information about those refugees and asylum seekers to the media?

Mr Pezzullo: I have no idea. I will take it on notice—

Senator Cash: I also would have to take that on notice.

Senator PRATT: If you could take that on notice.

Senator WATT: So you are taking on notice whether the minister provided that information to the media?

Mr Pezzullo: I will take on notice whether he wishes, through the minister, to respond in any way shape or form.

Senator WATT: Yes. Did the department private that information to the media?

Mr Pezzullo: I doubt it very much—

Senator WATT: Directly?

Mr Pezzullo: I doubt it very much, but I do not want to be inaccurate or to mislead, so I will check that. But I doubt it very much.

Senator WATT: But in this instance the department did provide that information to the minister's office?

Mr Pezzullo: I cannot say that for a fact, other than to say that thousands of briefs go up to the minister and his staff, including on AAT matters, I assume.

Ms Zakharoff: That is correct. We routinely provides advice to the minister on a range of matters, but including AAT—

Senator WATT: Ms Zakharoff, in this instance did the department provide advice about these AAT decisions to the minister's office?

Ms Zakharoff: I can say that we provide advice. I will have to confirm whether he has received the advice on these particular cases.

Mr Pezzullo: We will take that on notice and consult with the minister.

Senator PRATT: Mr Pezzullo, you have expressed caution about discussing those cases here on the public record today. What would preclude the minister from going public? Should the minister have the same level of caution about putting the cases of those individuals out in the media?

Mr Pezzullo: I have no basis to think that the minister has been anything other than cautious or otherwise. I will put these questions through Minister Cash to the minister and he can respond as he sees fit.

Answer:

The Department routinely provides advice to the Minister on AAT matters.