

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

Group: 2

Program: Other agency

Question No. SBE14/013

Senator O'Sullivan asked the following question at the hearing on 20 November 2014:

Senator O'SULLIVAN: No-one wants to see you cranky, Senator; that is not a pretty sight. You may have to take this on notice. I am keenly interested—and this is a common question of mine and you need to prepare yourself for future events. From a governance perspective, do you record when any panellists—in this case we are calling your panellists that come together a peer group—declare that they have a conflict?

Mr Grybowski: Yes.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Would you be able to provide us with data, because I have got to imagine that that is an absolute minefield. I would be surprised if you had a peer group who on every occasion, or every second occasion, did not declare that they had a conflict. What do you do with the peer member who declares? What are the guidelines for the peer member who declares they have a conflict?

Mr Grybowski: Then they are removed from the assessment of that particular applicant.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: As a general question, given there are thousands of applicants, there would be a bit of breeze coming off the door here, would there?

Mr Grybowski: We try to match the—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: No, the question is—and you may not be able to answer it—is this frequent?

Mr Grybowski: I will take that question on notice.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: But you are the CEO. You are probably somewhere else in the building. Do you go past the tearoom and there are mobs of peers waiting to go back in?

Mr Grybowski: There are peers who—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I will tell you what, I am going to take up my time until we get there. We can go the long way or the short way. I am asking you, as the CEO of this organisation, do you have a sense of whether this is a common thing happening? If there are thousands of applications, does this happen on hundreds of occasions?

Mr Grybowski: I would say it is not common, but it is a very important aspect to ensure that there is not conflict, and occasionally peers would have to absent themselves. The answer to the question is that it is not common.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: All right. Then you may have to take this on notice: do you keep a record of what peers are selected for which applications to process?

Mr Grybowski: Absolutely. That is recorded.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Can you take that on notice and give me a copy of that? I do not know whether the rest of the panel is interested. I am going to have a bo-peep, because I find it extraordinary that this is not a frequent contingency that you have to deal with.

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

There are a significant number of peers across all panels. The names of the peers are included in the assessment reports for each funding round, published on the Australia Council website: <http://2014.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/grant-decisions>.