

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 178  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Corporate  
**Programme:** Policy and Communications Division  
**Topic:** Portfolio wide - Freedom of Information training  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 7 March 2014  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Ludwig asked:**

1. What training does the department provide to designated decision makers under the Freedom of Information Act who work within the department?
  - a) Of the officers designated as decision makers within the department, how many have received formal training?
  - b) Of the officers designated as decision makers within the department, how many have received informal training?
  - c) How long after each officers appointment as a designated decision maker did they receive formal training?
  - d) What did the training involve?
  - e) How long was the training?
  - f) By whom was the training conducted?
2. What training does the department provide to designated decision makers under the Freedom of Information Act who work within the Minister's office, excluding those officers on secondment from the department?
  - a) Of the officers designated as decision makers, how many have received formal training?
  - b) Of the officers designated as decision makers, how many have received informal training?
  - c) How long after each officers appointment as a designated decision maker did they receive formal training?
  - d) What did the training involve?
  - e) How long was the training?
  - f) By whom was the training conducted?

**Answer:**

**Department of the Environment**

1. Please refer to the Department's response to the Supplementary Budget Estimates question 201 in November 2013. This response is unchanged.
2. Please refer to the Department's response to the Supplementary Budget Estimates question 202 in November 2013. This response is unchanged.

**Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau)**

1. Prior to being given a delegation training is provided on statutory responsibilities and requirements under the FOI Act to each decision maker. General information briefings on FOI are provided to all staff during information awareness week at the Bureau and information is always available on the Bureau's website and intranet. This information is updated as required and staff are advised of changes.
  - a) Five.

- b) Five.
  - c) Training is provided prior to being given a delegation to make decisions.
  - d) Formal training consists of the FOI Coordinator explaining the decision-making process, the role of the decision-maker, relevant exemptions, the charges regime and publication requirements. The FOI Coordinator works closely with first time decision-makers on their initial case, and provides advice on subsequent cases.
  - e) The training occurs during a number of meetings during the FOI process.
  - f) FOI Coordinator.
2. Not applicable.

### **Clean Energy Regulator**

1. Due to the relatively low number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by the Clean Energy Regulator (approximately one or two per month), training is provided to individual decision makers on an as-needed basis. The training is provided informally.
  - a) No formal training has been provided to decision makers by the Clean Energy Regulator.
  - b) Two decision makers have received informal training. The other authorised decision makers have not been required to make any decision on an FOI request to date, and have therefore not required any training.
  - c) No formal training has been provided by the Clean Energy Regulator. Informal training is provided as and when required to each decision maker when assigned as the decision maker to a particular matter.
  - d) No formal training has been provided. However, informal training involved an explanation of the FOI legislation (including the FOI Guidelines), both at the start of each matter and as required during the processing of each matter.
  - e) Please refer to the response provided at part e.
  - f) Training is provided by the General Counsel and Senior Legal Officers employed by the agency.
2. The Clean Energy Regulator does not provide training to persons employed within the Minister's Office. No person in the Minister's Office is authorised to make a decision in relation to an FOI request made to the Clean Energy Regulator.

### **Climate Change Authority**

1. There are no formal training programs for designated decision makers under the *Freedom of Information Act* who work within the Climate Change Authority. Designated decision makers relied upon the advice and support of legally qualified practitioners within the Department of Industry Legal Services team.
  - a) None.
  - b) One.
  - c) Not applicable.
  - d) Not applicable.
  - e) Not applicable.
  - f) Not applicable.
2. The Climate Change Authority has no designated decision makers under the *Freedom of Information Act* working in the Minister's office.
  - a) Not applicable.
  - b) Not applicable.
  - c) Not applicable.
  - d) Not applicable.
  - e) Not applicable.

- f) Not applicable.

#### **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority**

1. Designated decision makers within the Legal Services section have attended FOI training provided by the Australian Government Solicitor.
  - a) Two.
  - b) Two of the designated decision makers have received informal decision training through the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner website, guidelines and publications.
  - c) One received formal training within one month of appointment and one had received formal training prior to appointment with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.
  - d) Attendance at a training course.
  - e) One day.
  - f) Australian Government Solicitor.
2. See answers given above.

#### **Murray-Darling Basin Authority**

1. a) – f) The Murray-Darling Basin Authority provided formal training to all decision makers in August 2010 by Blake Dawson. Since that date, informal advice and guidance to all decision makers in accordance the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's guidelines has been provided on an on-going basis as required.
2. Not applicable.

#### **National Water Commission**

1. Due to the very small number of FOI requests received by the Commission training is provided to a decision maker on an as-needed basis. The level of training would be considered in the context of the complexity of the matter under consideration and may be limited to informal training.
  - a) no formal training has been provided
  - b) no informal training has been required
  - c) – f) not applicable.
2. Not applicable.

#### **Sydney Harbour Federation Trust**

There has been no change to the answer provided to this question through Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013 QON 201 and 202.