

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

**Question No:** 190  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Corporate  
**Programme:** Policy and Communications Division (PCD)  
**Topic:** Ministerial leave  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 4 March 2014  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Ludwig asked:**

Was the minister on leave at any point during the Christmas break (between the last sitting of parliament in 2013 and the first sitting in 2014)? If so:

a) Please table a schedule of the ministers leave. Please include:

- i. The dates the minister was on leave.
- ii. The dates the minister was out of the country (if applicable).

b) Who was acting in the minister's place?

- i. What date was it decided to have this person act in the minister's place?
- ii. What was the process for selecting this person?
- iii. Who was involved in making this decision?

c) Were there any matters with which the department needed to make contact with the minister during this time? If so:

- i. Please provide a list of these matters and the date they occurred
- ii. Please provide a copy of any correspondence, emails, notes etc between the minister and the department during this time.
- iii. Were there any times that the department was aware that it would be unable to communicate with the minister?
- iv. Were there any times that the department tried to contact the minister but were unable?

d) Were there any matters with which the department needed to make contact with the acting minister during this time? If so:

- i. Please provide a list of these matters and the date they occurred
- ii. Please provide a copy of any correspondence, emails, notes etc between the acting minister and the department during this time.
- iii. Were there any times that the department was aware that it would be unable to communicate with the acting minister?
- iv. Were there any times that the department tried to contact the acting minister but were unable?

v. but were unable?

e) Did the department contact the Minister or acting minister during this time? If so:

- i. Please provide a list of these matters and the date they occurred
- ii. Please provide a copy of any correspondence, emails, notes etc between the minister and or acting minister and the department during this time.

**Answer:**

a-e) The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, was on leave from 20 December 2013 to 10 January 2014 inclusive. During this time period, Minister Hunt authorised the Minister for Finance, Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, to act on his behalf in relation to the performance of functions and/or exercise of powers for the Environment Portfolio after seeking a nomination from the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP.

The Department worked with Minister Hunt and his office in the lead up to the period of leave to ensure that contact was limited to issues of high importance.

In instances where the Department needed to engage with the Minister/acting Minister it did so in accordance with long standing practices.