

# Senate Standing Committee on Economics

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

31 May – 2 June 2011

Question No: BET 12

Topic: Ministerial Council of Federal Financial Relations

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

Where does the Ministerial Council of Federal Financial Relations sit within the Department of Treasury? [Who sits on it, get names of MPs & public servants]

Who sits on it? MPs? Public servants?

Is it resourced from within the Department?

How often does it meet? Quarterly?

Can you confirm that at these meetings quarterly reports relating to BER funding and P21 funding submitted by the states and territories as part of their commitment under the National Partnerships Agreement is considered? [confirm that they have received quarterly reports for every quarter from each state and territory]. *when did quarterly reports commence? all states + territories?*

Are these approved each quarter before further funding is approved? Is final approval given by the Council? Does it stop there or is there further consultation with the Minister for example? [which one?]

Against what benchmarks are these quarterly reports considered – I understand these were established by the Heads of Treasury? Does this include benchmarks on value to the taxpayer? Provide copies of the benchmarks.

If the Council finds that if the states and territories have not reached their benchmarks the Commonwealth can impose sanctions – has this been done?

If sanctions are put in place how are costs recovered – please provide details. *how many since program started (which states)?*

The Minister for Education has claimed public interest immunity grounds for not providing the document citing that the reason for the harm as having the 'potential to prejudice the Commonwealth's position in future dealings with the State and Territory Government's including in relation to recovery action' – what is the prejudice for harm? [Press for reason – press for provision of legal advice and if they continue to refuse as for the committee to be briefed in-camera]

*(5) P2*

*(3) (4) / 5 (12)*

Answer:

Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations

The Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations meets at least once a year. It comprises the Commonwealth Treasurer and the Treasurers of each State and Territory (or designated representatives).

The information in the reports relating to the implementation of the BER and P21 programs was provided by the States and Territories in confidence. Since the commencement of the Plan, in accordance with this agreement, the Commonwealth has not made these reports public.