

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Estimates

4 June 2013

Question: BR9

Topic: Tourism Division Head Position - Number of Applicants

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Senator Ronaldson asked:

Senator RONALDSON: I am sure you can detail at great length Ms Lewis's tourism experience to be put into a role such as that. Can you do that for me?

Mr Comley: I can outline at length Ms Lewis's capacity to perform as a first assistant secretary.

Senator RONALDSON: No, you are going to outline for me, please, which was my question, what Ms Lewis's tourism experience is. I do not want to know about the other matters. She is the head of the tourism division. You are going to outline for me, please, what her tourism experience is.

Mr Comley: With respect, Senator, when we look at the application of anyone to a position within the Public Service there is a range of duties that they have to discharge.

Senator RONALDSON: Is the answer no, Mr Comley, so that we do not waste a lot of time going round and round in circles? Are you telling me that Ms Lewis has no tourism experience? If it is, just tell me and I can get on with some other questions.

Mr Comley: I think, Senator, it would depend on how you would define tourism experience.

Senator RONALDSON: Has she hopped on a plane as well, as the minister sitting there thought she is automatically qualified for the job?

Mr Comley: For example, in Ms Lewis's background she has worked extensively in the immigration area. When we deal with stakeholders in tourism one of the issues that invariably comes up is the interaction between the tourism sector and the immigration area. In the tourism division one of the most important things is to manage the grants program. To manage a grants program it is actually quite useful to have managed grants programs elsewhere to be well across the guidance within the Public Service as to how that is done, to manage probity. Those are the sorts of experiences that Ms Lewis brings to the role and complements the members of the tourism division that have more direct tourism industry experience.

Senator RONALDSON: I put it to you that, in relation to direct tourism experience, Ms Lewis has none whatsoever. Can I ask you to go through the application process for this position?

Mr Comley: Ms Lewis was also transferred under a section 72 transfer under the machinery-of-government change.

Senator RONALDSON: Is this a direct transfer?

Mr Comley: Yes.

Senator RONALDSON: So, there was no process, no engagement process. Had you called for applications for the position?

Mr Comley: There had been an application process in train. At the time of the machinery-of-government change I looked at the application process, looked at the fact that Ms Lewis was available under a section 72 transfer, and judged that she was the best person for the job.

Senator RONALDSON: So there was a process in place, was there, to appoint this divisional head?

Mr Comley: There was a process.

Senator RONALDSON: Can you tell me how far that process had proceeded? Had there been applications called for?

Mr Comley: It had been advertised, applications had been submitted, there had been some shortlisting of the candidates from the application process, and that was where the process was at the point of the machinery-of-government change.

Senator RONALDSON: How many applications had there been?

Mr Comley: I would have to take that on notice. I do not know precisely. My recollection is that it would be in the order of 30 applications.

Answer:

24 Applications were received for the Head of Tourism Division, SES Band 2 role.