

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2012-2013**

Outcome 4 – Workplace Relations and Economic Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0288_13

Senator Abetz asked on 29 May 2012 , Hansard page 74

Question

Minister Shorten - Fair Work Australia report

Senator ABETZ: Did you provide any advice to the minister or parliamentary secretary about the wisdom or the foolishness of releasing the report? Mr Kovacic: Not that I can recall. I can take that on notice, for reasons of comprehensiveness. Senator ABETZ: All right. Parliamentary Secretary, can you please take on notice why, not armed with any advice from the department, Minister Shorten went public seeking to ensure that the Fair Work Australia report into the HSU's national office was not made available publicly? Senator Jacinta Collins: I am sorry, Senator Abetz. I am not sure what you are referring to. Senator ABETZ: Minister Shorten's public statement requesting— Senator Jacinta Collins: As of when? Senator ABETZ: I am sure Minister Shorten would have it. I will find it, hopefully, during the course of these estimates. Senator Jacinta Collins: I would have to see those comments in their context to accept that that was the position that Minister Shorten— Senator ABETZ: I have said it many time in interviews and, surprisingly, Minister Shorten has never come back to deny that that is what he said. Senator Jacinta Collins: If you give us the reference I can take that on notice and get a response for you. Senator ABETZ: I am sure you do not need a reference for it. If the minister cannot recollect saying that, by all means get back to me. But if the minister cannot recollect, I think he will have some further issues to deal with at further estimates. I will leave it at that. Did the minister have any contact whatsoever with the law firm Holding Redlich, who were being funded by the Labor Party to help run Mr Craig Thomson's defence, or with any other persons within the Labor Party or government as to him making the call that the report not be publicly released? And the reason— Senator Jacinta Collins: Senator, I am still not with you that he ever did make that call. You said you will provide us with that statement. Senator ABETZ: I can assure you that he did and I am sure that his very expensive media monitoring service, which he refuses to share with the opposition, will be able to ensure that those reports are found very easily. Senator Jacinta Collins: I do not recall ever, as a shadow parliamentary secretary, having access to that 'very expensive media service' either. Senator ABETZ: So questions have been taken on notice.

Answer

Did you provide any advice to the minister or parliamentary secretary about the wisdom or the foolishness of releasing the report?

Why, not armed with any advice from the department, Minister Shorten went public seeking to ensure that the Fair Work Australia report into the HSU's national office was not made available publicly?

The Minister received oral advice from his Department, including advice received on 26 April 2012, not to call for publication of the report by Fair Work Australia on the investigation into the National Office of the Health Services Union, before an assessment could be made as to the potential for publication to prejudice possible legal proceedings.

Did the minister have any contact whatsoever with the law firm Holding Redlich, who were being funded by the Labor Party to help run Mr Craig Thomson's defence, or with any other persons within the Labor Party or government as to him making the call that the report not be publicly released?

The Department is not aware of any contact between the Minister and Holding Redlich or any other persons within the Labor Party or government in relation to the making of this statement.