

**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. EW0304_13

Senator Abetz asked on 29 May 2012, Hansard page 107

Refers to previous DEEWR Question No EW1158_12.

Question

Ministers involved in teleconference mentioned in EW1158_12

Senator ABETZ: The context is this: at what time did the telephone conference with ministers take place and which ministers were involved? 'Which ministers were involved' was the question. We have gratuitously bolded for me: We immediately had a telephone meeting of ministers. That tells me straightaway, doesn't it, which ministers were involved? You then bold another one: I had a discussion with the Prime Minister and we had discussions between ministers. Once again, it does not tell me which ministers. Then, we have another bolding: When the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport was informed of their decision, which they said was non-negotiable, he rang me—he rang the Treasurer—and I then spoke to him. I subsequently spoke to the Prime Minister and to a number of other ministers ... Which of those bolded sections tells me which ministers, which is what I had specifically asked originally? I then asked again in this question and you have the audacity to come here and tell me that I have misunderstood the answers and so to highlight the actual answer we have them bolded to let me know which ministers. Can you tell me—from the bolding of these answers—which ministers were involved in these telephone hook-ups? Mr Kovacic: From the bolding, no. In terms of the answer itself, one could assert Minister Evans, Minister Albanese, the Prime Minister, and the Treasurer, would have been involved in the conversation. Senator ABETZ: Amongst others. Mr Kovacic: I do not know about that. Senator ABETZ: No, amongst others because— Mr Kovacic: I cannot say. Senator ABETZ: It looks as though I will have to bold some of my questions for you, Mr Kovacic. The answer reads, in part: When the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport was informed of their decision, which they said was non-negotiable, he rang me— That was Senator Evans— —he rang the Treasurer—and I then spoke to him. I subsequently spoke to the Prime Minister— They are all the ones you have just mentioned. and to a number of other ministers ... Who are these other ministers? Which ministers? Where am I told? Ms Paul: I do not want to split hairs, but you are exercised about this. You asked which ministers were involved in the teleconference. You did not ask which other ministers. So we have answered. As Mr Kovacic indicated, I am not sure of the number of other ministers who were part of the teleconference. It is not to say we cannot answer that question, but I just want to be clear. Senator ABETZ: Ms Paul, please. It says: We immediately had a telephone meeting of ministers. That was the teleconference, was it not? A telephone meeting of ministers. Which ministers are included in that? We are not told, are we? We are then told later: When the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport was informed of their decision ... he rang me ... I then spoke to him. I subsequently spoke to the Prime Minister and to a number of other ministers ... They

are all individual telephone calls, not the telephone conference or teleconference. Ms Paul: If you wish, we will take it on notice. Senator ABETZ: Third time lucky, we might be told which ministers. Ms Paul: We need to ask Minister Evans as again, presumably. Senator ABETZ: I trust the bolding was not an initiative of the department— Senator Jacinta Collins: We will not forget the bolding, Senator Abetz. Senator ABETZ: given the non-answer and the agreement now to take it on notice, yet again.

Answer

Refer to Senate Parliamentary Question 1913.