



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet



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CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600

Mr Alistair Sands
Secretary
Senate Finance and Public
Administration Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sands

**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE
2003-04 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING – 16 FEBRUARY 2004**

Attached is the response to PM20 taken on notice during the above hearing. Responses to three questions on notice remain outstanding. The department will provide these responses as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Williams
First Assistant Secretary
People, Resources and Communications Division

10 February 2005

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Additional Estimates Hearings 2003-2004, 16 February 2004

Question: PM 20

Outcome 1, Output 3.2

Topic: Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD.

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Senator Ray asked: This is not the first report that has gone to ministers for approval. Has PM&C ever had a coordinating role before?

Answer: PM&C records show no evidence of PM&C's having previously performed a coordinating role in relation to PJCAAD draft reports circulated for review under section 7 of the schedule to the Intelligence Services Act 2001 (the 'Act').

We note that, under the Act, the role of responsible ministers is not to approve draft PJCAAD reports but to provide advice to the PJCAAD as to whether disclosure of any part of a report would or might disclose a matter referred to in subsection 7(1) of the schedule to the Act. In accordance with the Act, any such determination needs to consider "information that would or might prejudice Australia's national security or the conduct of Australia's foreign relations" (section 7, subsection (1) (c) (ii)). PM&C has a key role in developing and coordinating foreign, national security and intelligence policies. This role has been strengthened by the establishment of the National Security Division. PM&C's assistance in coordinating the responsible ministers' response to the draft report was sought on the basis of this role and the need to coordinate between three agencies. In performing coordination in relation to the draft report on intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, PM&C's aim was to ensure the committee was provided with the best possible advice.