

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 25 & 26

Outcome 1

Topic: Appointment of new Head of ONA.

Hansard Page: F&PA 133

Senator Faulkner asked: You might take on notice whether there was a short list; if there was, whether Mr Varghese's name was on it—in other words, if an original list that was provided to the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's office contained his name. If not, you might indicate to us if and when his name was put forward or added to the list.

Answer: The Public Service Commissioner maintains a regularly updated list of Band 3 (Deputy) officers who have the potential to go further. The Commissioner provides this list to the Secretary on a confidential basis. Mr Varghese's name was on the Public Service Commissioner's list, indicating in particular that he had the potential to lead ONA. The Secretary also consulted with the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on possible candidates, including Mr Varghese. The Secretary used the Commissioner's list and his discussions with the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to inform oral discussions that took place between himself and the Prime Minister, which canvassed a range of possible candidates. Following these discussions the Prime Minister decided to appoint Mr Varghese as Director-General of ONA.