

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Additional Estimates Hearings 18 February 2008



Question: PM14

Outcome 1, Output 4

Topic: Code of Conduct

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Senator Minchin asked: Senator RONALDSON - But if we do not have a definition of what is public business then how can the community possibly make a decision? I will just read through 6.1 again:

Ministers are expected to conduct all official business on the basis that they may be expected to demonstrate publicly that their actions and decisions in conducting public business were taken with the sole objective of advancing the public interest...

Senator MINCHIN - That is supposed to read 'official business', surely. What is public business? Is this simply transferred from the previous code of conduct? Reading this, I find that a lot of this is what I remember of the ministerial code of conduct...

Senator MINCHIN - Was this clause taken from the other one? I put it to you that I think that is actually a mistake. It should read in the second line 'official business'...

Ms Belcher - We will look at it, then.

Senator RONALDSON - Minister, have you got any comments on this? You were presumably involved in its preparation.

Senator Chris Evans-Senator Minchin's point is one that I will take on notice and check...

Answer: The terms 'official business' and 'public business', in the context of clause 6.1 of the Standards of Ministerial Ethics, have the same meaning.