

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-10

Questions on Notice (QoN) index -

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Answers to QON are due on Friday, 26 March 2010.

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 1	DFD/Medibank	Ryan	3, 4	Senator RYAN —When did the change to the Medicare levy surcharge threshold kick in—the increase from \$50,000 to just over \$70,000? Mr Savvides —I will have to take the specific date on notice...
F 2	DFD/Medibank	Ryan	4	Senator RYAN —I suppose what I was getting to was that the Medicare levy surcharge threshold was always considered relatively effective in getting younger people into the market who are crossing the income threshold. If you need to take this on notice, I would be happy. Has there been any material change in the age profile of the membership of Medibank Private over the last nine months or since the change came in July? Mr Savvides —If I was speaking in general terms, I would say, no, there has not been. You have asked a specific question about the influence. I can take that on notice.
F 3	DFD/Medibank	Joyce	7	Senator JOYCE —What is your average case payment? Mr Savvides —I do not actually have that figure. It would be something like \$3,000 to \$4,000 per member. I could take that notice because the definition is everything.

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F 4	DFD/Medibank	Joyce	8	<p>Senator JOYCE—What return are you getting on your cash at the moment?</p> <p>Mr Savvides—We are pretty well exposed in the equity portfolio to the average market in Australia and overseas, so we have enjoyed the very strong half-year that has occurred between July and December.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—What return are you getting on your cash at the moment?</p> <p>Mr Savvides—On the cash side—the interest return?</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—Yes.</p> <p>Mr Savvides—I think those rates are sitting at around three per cent at the moment.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—You could do better than that, couldn't you?</p> <p>Mr Savvides—You can, but we are conservative cash investors. We will not play with artificial instruments that create jeopardy, which we have seen in the last 18 months. Yes, you can—you can find some manufactured synthetic products that will give you interesting returns, but we do not play in that game. The three per cent is a guestimate. If you want a specific number, I will take that on notice.</p>
F 5	DFD/Medibank	Ronaldson	10	<p>Senator RONALDSON—Minister, you must look at Mr Savvides on your right and you must look at, potentially, what money might come in from the sale of Medibank Private. You have had the department have a bit of a look at this, have you, to see what the organisation might be worth?</p> <p>Senator Sherry—As you are aware, I am the representative minister. I will have to take that on notice and pass it to Minister Tanner.</p>
F 6	Finance	Fifield	11, 12	<p>Senator FIFIELD—What has the department of finance done itself in relation to taking advantage of this exemption as the department which is responsible for procurement and which has provided this exemption?</p> <p>Mr Tune—We do not have the relevant officer here at the moment but I will take that on notice and we will give you a rundown of what we have done in particular in Finance.</p>
F 7	Finance	Fifield	11	<p>Mr Grant—We do have a list of disability enterprises. AusTender in its current form has been operating for only two years. I could have a look at whether we are able to match up the list of disability enterprises that we have with tenders awarded.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Yes, if you could.</p>

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F 8	Finance	Fifield	12	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. Also, and this may be difficult so you may want to take it on notice, if it is possible to provide the information about the take-up of this exemption would it be possible to compare the first year of the take-up of the operation of this exemption to that of a period beforehand? We could see whether this exemption has actually led to an increase, so we would not just have the absolute numbers for the first year of operation but we could compare it to the previous year or two or three.</p> <p>Mr Tune—I think the difficulty is going to be the AusTender data and how far back it goes. We will have a look but I have got my doubts that we would be able to give you anything that we would consider to be statistically reliable. But I will have a look.</p>
F 9	Finance	Ronaldson	15	<p>Senator RONALDSON—Well, I am a very passionate supporter and user of COMCAR. Do we really believe that it is worth \$27,000 to write a history of COMCAR, given the rather remarkable constraints that the federal government now finds itself in? In fact, Minister, I will ask you this question. Do you think that the history of COMCAR should be one of the priorities of your department, given the fact that we are by the day seeing a massive blow-out in debt and the requirement for the Australian community to service that debt? Do we need to do a history of COMCAR?</p> <p>Senator Sherry—Firstly, I was unaware of the circumstances' justification, so I will take it on notice and obtain the facts and arguments and then I will give you a response.</p>
F 10a, F 10b	Finance	Ronaldson	16	<p>Senator RONALDSON—Down at the bottom, there is a procurement team—is that Nth Degree's or is that yours?</p> <p>Mr Grant—This is ours. I will need to get you the detail of this contract. The procurement reporting team in fact is part of one of my branches which deals with—</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—We have discovered the reporting team.</p> <p>Mr Grant—No, it is not a team in itself.</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—Well, that is what it says.</p> <p>Mr Grant—'Office' is what it calls itself. It is a part of a branch which does contract management. We have two contracts in the media area, one for campaign advertising and one for non-campaign advertising. It manages those contracts.</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—How many people are in that team?</p> <p>Mr Grant—I think there are 3.5, because we have a part-timer there as well, but I would have to confirm that if you want the specific details.</p>

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F 11	Finance	Ronaldson	18, 19	<p>Senator RONALDSON—In that, the press release said that there would be \$395 million cut from the use of consultants in the Commonwealth Public Service. My question to you is: has there been \$395 million cut from consultants' costs? If you do not know the answer, I am happy for you to take it on notice.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—Firstly, as I have said, we stand by our figures. You have referred to some figures in the <i>Australian</i>. I understand that Minister Tanner himself has said publicly that those figures are incorrect. Whether the journalist wants to contact the minister's office is up to the journalist concerned, but they are not right.</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—But will you take on notice my question of whether there has been a \$395 million cut, which was in that press release, has actually been achieved? Will you take that on notice, please.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—Just for the record: the journalist was incorrect, and Minister Tanner has put that on the public record. And I put on the public record the significant savings that have been achieved by this government in the areas of consultancy and advertising. Further, to conclude, I will take on notice what you said, but this may help—not may; will: the one-off increase in the efficiency dividend is on the same basis as the government's efficiency dividend and, to assist in this task, incorporates Labor's previously identified and announced efficiencies worth \$860 million, such as advertising expenditure, consultancies, non-Defence related recruitment expenses, opinion poll and market research spending, and media monitoring undertaken by departments. That is in the definitive election commitment of the Labor Party from opposition made by Minister Tanner on 22 November 2007.</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—And go to the March press release of 2007 and you will see that figure.</p>
F 12	DFD/AMG	Joyce	22	<p>HDA4Cormann, Sen Mathias0Senator JOYCE—Has anybody got back to you and said, 'We're beyond our 16 metres of accommodation area'.</p> <p>Mr Tune—Yes, there are some.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—Can you tell me who they are?</p> <p>Mr Tune—I would have to take that on notice but I can do so.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 13	DFD/AMG	Joyce	22, 23	<p>Senator Sherry—Hang on. Mr Tune has already indicated that there are some departments that are over-space. So it is already working. Some that have been identified will have to carry out an adjustment and reduce their space. So it is working. As to whether or not there is a requirement for direct verification, however that would be done—this is a new program—I am happy to take that on notice for the minister. But, as I said, Mr Tune has indicated that the program is working. We have reports of over-space. Those departments will be required to reduce that space and as to whether it will be necessary to carry out ongoing verification work I will get the minister to respond to that.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—The point is: have we appropriated any money, or is there money put aside in any further budget for people to go out and check?</p> <p>Mr Tune—No. It is not clear to me that it will be necessary.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—The financial pressure and the financial requirements in the allocation of the moneys will be very powerful on the department.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—But no-one checks so no-one knows.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—We are not saying that. What I am saying is that I will take it on notice. It is a new program—</p> <p>Senator Sherry—Just hang on. When I have finished we will answer that question. It is a new program. Over allocation of space has been identified. There is a budget allocation so there is a financial pressure on departments to get it right. I have taken on notice whether or not any further direct inspection beyond the financial incentive—that is, pressure to reduce space where that has been identified—will be necessary. I am happy to take that on notice.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 14 ¹	Finance	Joyce	24	<p>Senator JOYCE—The question is: have you audited to find out whether people are actually abiding by the minister’s direction of maintaining themselves to 16 square metres per accommodation area? Has there been any checking of that and is there any process in train that is going to check that, or are we just relying on an honesty box of people telling us and ascertaining themselves, by their own deduction, what is a peripheral area and what is an accommodation area? If that is the process then the whole statement is unbelievable.</p> <p>Mr Scott-Murphy—Senator, the guidelines make clear the areas that are to be included in the 16 square metres per occupied work station. They also make clear those areas that are not to be included in the area measurement. There is a table in the guidelines that makes that crystal clear to agencies. Agencies are required to measure their own areas and report, and we conduct an independent audit of those measurements to be satisfied that the targets that we are setting and the forecast of savings that would be applied are accurately based.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—I will just ask two questions there. The first audit was just to ascertain the position as it is at the moment?</p> <p>Mr Scott-Murphy—I will take that and hope to get back to you before the end of this session with the accurate figure.</p>
F 15	Finance	Joyce	24	<p>Senator JOYCE—I will go onto another area. Mr Tanner put out a press release on 2 November 2009 in which he stated that the government has now delivered more than \$7 billion in savings from its own operations. Can you list what and where those operational savings are?</p> <p>Mr Tune—I would have to take that on notice.</p>
F 16	DFD/Budget	Joyce	25	<p>Senator JOYCE—Can you tell me what the total savings are to date since the 2007 election?</p> <p>Mr Tune—Once again I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—Has anybody been involved in working out what the savings are to date since the 2007 election?</p> <p>Mr Tune—We can do that, but I will take it on notice and give you a full answer.</p>

¹ Answered on Hansard 09/02/10 p. 42

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 17	DFD/Budget	Joyce	25	<p>Ms Campbell—To date, the government has announced savings measures totalling \$56 billion over five years in the first two budgets. In the 2008-09 budget there were savings of \$33.3 billion and in the 2009-10 budget there were savings of \$22.6 billion.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—So you have said \$56 billion there, haven't you?</p> <p>Ms Campbell—Yes.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—Did Wayne Swan's office put out a release on 12 January 2010 saying that it was \$55 billion?</p> <p>Ms Campbell—We can take that on notice and have a look. Sometimes there are rounding elements with Budget papers or those types of numbers, which may explain the discrepancy.</p>
F 18	DFD/Budget	Joyce	26	<p>Senator JOYCE—Can you give a list of how much of this \$10 billion in savings has actually been achieved? Give me one example of one of those savings.</p> <p>Ms Campbell—We have not reconciled against the \$10 billion figure in the document that I think you are talking about. We have a list of those savings options that have been announced by government in the budget, and we can go through those, which make up the \$56 billion that I talked about earlier.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—So nothing has been reconciled back to test the veracity of the \$10 billion savings released on 22 November 2007?</p> <p>Ms Campbell—We do not have that information with us, no. But we do have a list of all the other savings options. I know that many of them were detailed in that \$10 billion list, but we do not have reconciliation to the \$10 billion.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator Sherry—We will take on notice the reconciliation, but I did give some examples earlier today in the area of consultants in advertising, for example. But we will take it on notice and we will come back to you with a comprehensive and detailed list.</p>
F 19	DFD/ FMG	Joyce	31	<p>Senator JOYCE—How can we have Operation Sunlight when you have completely precluded the capacity of the alternative government to cost their policies?</p> <p>Mr Tune—Under the Charter of Budget Honesty at the moment there is provision for limited costing by the public service of opposition policies. Operation Sunlight took that further as a policy proposition and that is the issue that is still under consideration.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—When will we get to the conclusion?</p> <p>Mr Tune—That is a matter for the government.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—I am happy to take it on notice for the minister.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 20 ²	DFD/AGIMO	Ludlam	Page 32	<p>Mr Fry—Some years ago we did do a survey to collect data on the use of open source software in Australian government. At that time 68 per cent of agencies that responded were either piloting or using open source software. Without going into the statistics, generally the disposition was very positive towards it. My assumption would be that in the subsequent years, where there was a good fit to their needs, that number will have increased.</p> <p>Senator LUDLAM—So it is not completely alien to departmental culture. How long ago was that survey conducted?</p> <p>Mr Fry—I will have to get back to you on that. I think it was around 2007.</p> <p>Senator LUDLAM—So it was not that long ago. Were the results of that made public or was that an internal memo?</p> <p>Mr Fry—I think they were made public. Again, I will get back to you on that, but I am pretty sure they were made public.</p>
F 21	DFD/Budget	Ryan	40	<p>Senator RYAN—Minister, my attention has been drawn to the Labor savings document of 2007 which projects, from 2006-07 to 2009-10, savings from the closure of the Nauru and Manus island centres of \$91 million. Over the same period the budget papers now show a discrepancy of \$56.2 million. I am wondering if you or your officials have an explanation for why the quite substantial difference, by about 60 per cent.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—I do not think the officials would because it was a document prepared before the election. What is the date of the document incidentally?</p> <p>Senator RYAN—I am actually chasing up the exact date now. It is 2007. I am just getting the date.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—There were a lot of days in 2007 before the election.</p> <p>Senator RYAN—I believe it was the most recent one prior to the election. What also—</p> <p>Senator Sherry—Hang on, you are asking a question. I think it is important to clarify. I referred earlier to the definitive document given to the department of finance for the purposes of costing under the Charter of Budget Honesty. That is the definitive document. So that is why the date is important. Secondly, if there is a discrepancy in the figures I would have to take on notice the base calculation of the figures, because the base calculation of the figures may in fact have been on the previous government's own estimates derived from this estimates process. So there is a number of issues to consider there and I am more than happy to take it on notice and refer it to Minister Tanner.</p>

² Answer tabled during hearing

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 22	DFD/ComSuper	Joyce	43	<p>Senator Sherry—I know something about this because I actually initiated the project [of outsourcing administrative services] before the change in portfolio responsibilities in June last year. The officers may be able to give you the figures but of the total number of employees in ComSuper—there are 400 or 500, I think—there is a small proportion involved in the accumulation fund administration. The vast majority are involved in the defined benefit administration, which is much more complex and bigger. Therefore, there is a capacity for ComSuper to employ that small group— and we can get the numbers if we have not got them here and take it on notice—within ComSuper or elsewhere in the public sector.</p>
F 23	DFD/FMG	Joyce	44	<p>Senator JOYCE—Can you provide an update on the nation-building funds? Mr Tune—Is there any particular aspect you are looking to— Senator JOYCE—The portfolio update as at 31 December 2009 show that the Education Investment Fund had a bit shy of \$6 billion in it. At 30 June, the portfolio update showed it as having \$6.490 billion in it. Can you provide details of what measures have been funded from the Education Investment Fund? Mr Tune—In terms of the amounts in the funds, it is probably best to ask the Future Fund. Witnesses from there will be here shortly. In terms of the investments made by the Education Investment Fund, there was a list produced last year when there was a big announcement made in the context of last year’s budget about all the projects that were being financed from the Education Investment Fund. I will get hold of that for you and provide that to you.</p>
F 24	Finance	Joyce	45	<p>Senator JOYCE—Can you provide an update on property and construction? Mr Tune—It is an ongoing function in the Department of Finance and Deregulation. Some of that we talked about earlier—property management and so forth. But we also act as landlord for a whole lot of government property and buildings. Senator JOYCE—What is the value of that property at the moment? Mr Tune—I could not tell you, but I can probably find that for you fairly quickly. It is a very substantial portfolio. It does not include this building, but the building that we occupy as a department is owned by the Commonwealth and a number of other buildings around Canberra. There are also a number of law courts and things like that around the country. Senator JOYCE—Do we have a rough approximation is of the value of our property portfolio. Mr Tune—I will get that for you shortly.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 25	DFD/AMG	Joyce	46	<p>Senator JOYCE—Centenary House is all finished, isn't it?</p> <p>Mr Tune—Yes. The Audit Office are still tenants there.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—Who owns it?</p> <p>Mr Scott-Murphy—I do not know the current owner. It sold recently.</p> <p>Senator JOYCE—What is the tenancy arrangement on Centenary House? Is that still locked in?</p> <p>Mr Tune—I do not know. I could not tell you. I will take that on notice.</p>
F 26	DFD/Dereg	Joyce	48	<p>Senator JOYCE—Do you want to hazard a guess at how much new regulation was brought down in Australia last year?</p> <p>Ms Page—We are only responsible for providing advice to the government in relation to Commonwealth regulation.</p> <p>Senator Sherry—These officials are highly professional. They are not going to guess. They will take it on notice unless they have got a figure here now.</p> <p>Ms Page – We do not have a figure.</p>
F 27	DFD/FFMA	Ryan	51	<p>Senator RYAN—...It was about: if you are still a Telstra shareholder and you had to vote in a Telstra general meeting on a particular issue, can the minister direct?</p> <p>Mr Costello—I could hazard a guess. We clarified that under the legislation. The minister can direct. The minister said he will not direct. I think your question was: if he changed his mind—</p> <p>Senator RYAN—If he changed his mind, is such a direction made public?</p> <p>Mr Costello—Certainly directions in terms of the investment mandate must be made public. Perhaps that is worth clarifying. My immediate assumption would be that it would be treated in the same way. That is probably a question for—</p> <p>Senator RYAN—I would appreciate it if you took that on notice. You can understand why the question has been asked. Just to clarify: I have not noticed anything.</p>
F 28	DFD/FMG	Kroger	52	<p>Senator KROGER—What criteria are used in determining those grants?</p> <p>Mr Tune—The criteria about what the EIF funds can be used for are set down in the act. They are largely around things like capital expenditure in the university sector, research facilities and those sorts of issues. I will take that on notice and give you more detail, if you like, about the exact eligibility criteria.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 29	DFD/FFMA	Joyce	57	<p>Senator JOYCE—Do you take positions on credit default swaps through your investments in Europe?</p> <p>Mr Costello—I would need to check the specifics. Again I would say it is not something that is done directly by the organisation, but I would need to check the mandates of those funds. So perhaps if you were comfortable, I could take that question on notice.</p>
F 30	DFD/FFMA	Joyce	58	<p>Mr Costello—All investments in the peace countries, as you have called them—equity and debt—are less than one per cent of the fund. We do not have more current data, but we can take it on notice.</p>
F 31	DFD/FFMA	Ryan	59, 60	<p>Senator RYAN—I appreciate they are done through mandates. The question also goes to the fact that a number of us would be worried if the funds managed by the Future Fund, regardless of whether or not they were done at arms-length, were being used to simply shuffle money around between Commonwealth accounts and shift debt from one government agency to your trusteeship of money for the Australian people. I asked for the three nation building funds, is it possible to get numbers for the Future Fund itself?</p> <p>Mr Costello—I think I should take that on notice and get it to you.</p> <p>Senator RYAN—I am doing some quick sums in my head.</p> <p>Mr Costello—The mandate for the nation building funds is very different to the Future Fund. In the nation building funds we hold no equities; we only hold fixed interest bonds. Clearly the impact of interest rates on that is acute. It is a very different program. You would expect to see this type of exposure, as a proportion, significantly higher there. Certainly in the Future Fund we do not try and manage this risk in the same way as we do in the nation building funds. In the nation building funds these securities are purchased directly by managers. We try and manage interest-rate risk differently for the Future Fund. I am happy to take the question on notice.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 32	DFD/CAPS	Ronaldson	61	<p>Senator RONALDSON— ... I turn briefly to the new entitlements regime, which was finalised last year on 22 December in ministerial circular 2009/32. I want to have a discussion with you about the definition of ‘party business’, which as you are aware excludes political fundraising. I would like to get an answer on the record as to what that means in practical effect. For example, if I am running a town hall meeting with a gold coin donation to cover costs of hall hire and coffee and biscuits, would I be permitted to advertise that meeting using the printing and communications allowance?</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—If there are particular circumstances that you want me to look at, we might put them on the record and I might take them on notice to have a considered look. But I might ask you just to clarify it in some respects. When you say ‘some of the information’ I might want you just to expand some particular points so that I understand what the balance is. I may find you saying that one again, because it just struck me as a bit more information you might have to describe.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—...So we have got the town hall community meeting scenario. What about in the situation where I was holding a breakfast, for example, with Mr Abbott at \$15 per person to cover costs—not a fundraiser, but a meet the community function, like a community cabinet type function. I am assuming that, given that I was not actually raising any funds for the campaign itself, I would not be captured, but I am interested in getting your view on it. Also, in a situation where there was even a nominal profit; for example, if you had budgeted for 40 people to come to a function at five bucks a head and 60 turned up, because it was generally advertised. I am happy for you to take that on notice, because it obviously is important to members and senators on both sides of the political arena. I will leave it up to you, Ms Clarke, whether you want to do it now or later.</p> <p>Ms Clarke—We will take on notice the detailed questions, but the general principle even before the reforms came into being has been that where you are just covering the costs with a donation it was not considered to be fundraising. That question has come up in the past. But we will take on notice the questions you have asked in those specific instances. I think we will answer them as well, but we will also put them out in the questions and answers document that the minister circulates and that way they will get around to everybody.</p>
F 33	DFD/CAPS	Ronaldson	63	<p>Senator RONALDSON—Is there any precedent for refusing a request to move when it occurs at the end of the lease?</p> <p>Mr Miles—I am not sure. I will take that on notice. There may be, but I cannot recall any.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 34	DFD/CAPS	Ronaldson	65	<p>Senator RONALDSON—Minister, can I ask you again, and Mr Miles may want to answer this question: my understanding is that under the previous government—and there were three Special Ministers of State—on not one occasion was an end-of-lease relocation request knocked back. I am happy for you to take that on notice. If indeed that is correct—and that is my understanding—then clearly there was a precedent over at least 11 years, I think it was—</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—As I have indicated, I am happy to look at it. I have made that plain. I always encourage members to raise the issue if they feel that the primary decision or the decision that was made may not have been to the outcome that they particularly wanted. I encourage them in that instance to write again and contact us if there is additional information. If there is additional supporting material that may underpin their position, it is always very helpful to include that.</p>
F 35	Finance	Ronaldson	65, 66	<p>Senator Ludwig—Are you aware, Senator, whether the member had contacted Ms O’Hare?</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—I think the member had been in constant contact with Ms O’Hare prior to her writing to you in relation to this matter. Indeed, she had made I think numerous requests for the relocation—</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—But you are not sure.</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—and had spoken to Ms O’Hare about it.</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—Do you think she has already spoken to Ms O’Hare about it?</p> <p>Senator RONALDSON—I don’t know. The letter was only sent on 21 January, so I am not too sure whether she has spoken to her since then.</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—We can check.</p>
F 36	DFD/CAPS	Moore	66	<p>Senator MOORE—I am just interested in terms of the process. We have had this discussion regularly, as you probably know. The process started out very well. Is there any indication that some of the people who are not returning their management reports are the same people? We have got percentage returns, but is there any indication that the people who were not returning their management reports in July—which was 20-odd per cent—were in the almost 80 per cent that have not certified in December?</p> <p>Ms Sims—We would have to take that on notice.</p>
F 37	DFD/FeSG	Ryan	69	<p>Senator RYAN—And I have been informed that in Tasmania the Optus service is only available in Hobart. Is that the case?</p> <p>Mr Quester—Unfortunately I would have to get some information from the department on Optus’s coverage within Tasmania. I do not have that with me.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 38	AEC	Fifield	71	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Minister, would you be prepared to make available a copy of the AEC's report and recommendations to you from December last year?</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—I will take that on notice and have a look at it. I just need to refresh my mind as to the contents. If I can see my way clear to making it available I certainly will.</p>
F 39	AEC	Fifield	72	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Minister, in that case—given that the commissioner has confirmed that he cannot guarantee a secret ballot for blind and vision impaired people, and at last estimates you unable to—with the benefit of the report and recommendations of the AEC and having had some time to consider those, are you able to give a commitment on behalf of the government that it is the government's intention to ensure that there will be the capacity for a secret ballot for blind and vision impaired electors at the next election?</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—I will consider that. I will take it on notice. It would depend on two issues, in terms of the answer I provide. One is dealing with how we intend to respond to the report, and the second is when I can make the report available. I want to deal with those first. But I am not able to provide that commitment.</p>
F 40a	AEC	Ryan	80	<p>Senator RYAN—Mr Killestyn, I would like to ask some questions about various industrial ballots the AEC conducts. In May last year, in answer to a question, the AEC indicated that the total cost of protected action ballots for 2008-09 is expected to be \$432,000, GST exclusive. Is that in line with the final outcome?</p> <p>Mr Killestyn—I will take on notice the final outcome for the financial year, but I would expect that that figure would be pretty close to the final outcome.</p>
F 40b	AEC	Ryan	80	<p>Senator RYAN—I imagine there are a few of these that you will have to take on notice, so feel free to indicate if that is the case. Could you also indicate what you are budgeting for in 2009-10? I would also be interested in the answers to these questions, if you can answer them: the total number of ballots for industrial elections and for protected action ballots in 2008-09; how many non-union industrial elections the AEC funded in 2008-09, because there are different types of employee and employer associations that I understand you undertake; and how many protected action ballots you funded in 2008-09.</p> <p>Mr Killestyn—We will take those on notice.</p>

QON No.	Department / group or agency	Senator	Hansard 09/02/2010 Page Ref/ Written	Question
F 41	AEC	Ryan	80	<p>Senator RYAN—Did the AEC undertake an investigation into those allegations either during the ballot or after its conclusion?</p> <p>Mr Pirani—Under the two pieces of fair work legislation—both the registered organisations act and the Fair Work Act 2009—we have no investigative powers per se. There is an approach where, for any investigation, you either go the Industrial Registrar, as it was prior to the Fair Work Act, but it is now the general manager of Fair Work Australia, or you go to court seeking an order in relation to there being an irregularity, or various orders from the court in relation to conduct that should be restrained in relation to threatened breaches of the act. In the matter with Health Services Union branch No. 1 in Victoria, there were several applications made to the Federal Court. They were heard before the Federal Court and no orders, in my understanding, were made. But I will take on notice to give you the exact outcome of the two hearings that occurred in the federal court, where these matters were ventilated, where affidavit evidence was put on by one of the parties in the Health Services Union election. But my clear recollection is that no orders were actually made by the court in relation to either of the hearings and the allegations.</p> <p>Senator RYAN—I assume from what you said—and again you can take this on notice—that those actions were taken by parties involved in the election.</p>
F 42	AEC	Ryan	81	<p>Senator RYAN—I understand that you are funded externally to conduct these ballots. Are you funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations? Is that what pays for these ballots?</p> <p>Mr Pirani—In relation to protected action ballots, yes. In relation to other industrial elections, no.</p> <p>Senator RYAN—Can you tell me what it cost for you to run this ballot?</p> <p>Mr Pirani—We will take that on notice.</p>
F 43 – F 90	Finance, AEC		Written	See below

Written Questions on Notice: (F 43 – F 90)

Staffing

F 43 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) What is the total expenditure on staffing for the Department and for all portfolio agencies?
- b) What is the SES and non-SES breakdown?

F 44 – Finance – Senator Ryan

What are the current staffing levels for SES and non-SES officers?

F 45 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) What have been the changes in staffing levels since November 2007?
- b) Why have these changes occurred?
- c) What have been the budgetary implications?
- d) What, if any, functions have been sacrificed?

F 46 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) Has there been a target for staff reductions to achieve savings?
- b) What is that target and what strategy is being implemented to achieve this?

F 47 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) Have any voluntary or involuntary redundancies been offered to staff?
- b) If so, how have staff been identified for such offers?
- c) Are there such plans for the future?

F 48 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) How many permanent staff were recruited since the supplementary budget estimates?
- b) What level are these staff?
- c) How many temporary positions exist or have been created since budget estimates?
- d) Since supplementary budget estimates, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?

F 49 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts?
- b) If so, where and at what level?
- c) Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details ie. reduction target, how this will be achieved, services/programs to be cut etc.

- d) What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? If reductions are envisaged please explain including reasons, target numbers etc.

Consultancies

F 50 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) How much, and for what, has the Department spent on external consultancies since November 2007?
b) For external consultancies currently being undertaken, what is the cost and project description of each?

F 51 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) How many consultancies have been undertaken or are underway since November 2007? Please identify the name of the consultant, the subject matter of the consultancy, the duration and cost of the arrangement, and the method of procurement (ie. open tender, direct source, etc). Please also include total value for all consultancies.
b) How many consultancies are planned for this calendar year?
c) Have these been published in your Annual Procurement Plan (APP) on the AusTender website and if not why not? In each case please identify the subject matter, duration, cost and method of procurement as above, and the name of the consultant if known.

Electorate data

F 52 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) Has the Department undertaken any research or created any reports that break down funding by electorate?
b) For whom, and when, have these reports been created?
c) How often are these reports updated?
d) Can the Department provide these reports?
e) Have these reports or other electorate-specific data been used in the allocation of grants since December 2007?

Grants

F 53 – Finance – Senator Ryan

Could the Department provide a list of all discretionary grants, including ad hoc and one-off grants since November 2007? Please provide details of the recipients, the intended use of the grants and what locations have benefited from the grants.

F 54 – Finance – Senator Barnett

These are subject to a continuing order of the Senate: Examine what has been provided and ask about non-answers, or potentially controversial grants.

F 55 – Finance – Senator Barnett

Has the Department complied with interim requirements relating to the publication of discretionary grants?

Reports

F 56 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) How many Reports have been commissioned by the Government in the Finance and Deregulation portfolio since November 2007?
- b) Please provide details of each report including date commissioned, date report handed to Government, date of public release, Terms of Reference and Committee members.
- c) How much did each report cost?
- d) How many departmental staff were involved in each report and at what level?
- e) What is the current status of each report?
- f) When is the Government intending to respond to these reports?

Election commitments

F 57 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) Has the Department identified the status of election commitments within its purview?
- b) Which of these commitments have yet to be completed? Why? What are revised expected completion dates for delayed commitments?

Advertising and marketing

F 58 – Finance – Senator Ryan

For all expenditure on advertising and marketing since December 2007:

- a) What is the cost, broken down by campaign/project?
- b) To whom was the contract awarded?
- c) What is the justification for the expenditure for each?

F 59 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) What communications programs has the Department/Agency undertaken, or are planning to undertake?
- b) For each program, what is the total spend?

Ministerial pressure on APS staff

F 60 - Finance – Senator Ryan

The Canberra Times reported on 4/12/09 that "ministers or their advisers pressured one in four executive-level bureaucrats to breach their duty to be apolitical, impartial or accountable in 2008-09."

- a) Did any Department of Finance and Deregulation staff report that they felt that ministers or their advisers pressured them to breach their duty to be apolitical, impartial or accountable in 2008-09?

- b) Did any staff report that they felt that the Minister for Finance and Deregulation or her advisers pressured them to breach their duty to be apolitical, impartial or accountable in 2008-09?

Breaches of APS Code of Conduct

F 61 – Finance – Senator Ryan

The State of the Service report for 2008-09 reported that there were in total 521 employees who were investigated and found to have breached the APS Code of Conduct:

- a) How many employees in Department of Finance and Deregulation were investigated for breaches of the APS Code of Conduct?
- b) How many employees in Department of Finance and Deregulation were investigated and found to have breached the APS Code of Conduct? If so, what breaches and how many of each were recorded?
- c) In relation to Department of Finance and Deregulation staff, how many employees were reprimanded for a breach of the APS Code of Conduct?
- d) In relation to Department of Finance and Deregulation staff, how many employees were counselled for a breach of the APS Code of Conduct?
- e) In relation to Department of Finance and Deregulation staff, how many employees had their employment terminated for a breach of the APS Code of Conduct?
- f) In relation to Department of Finance and Deregulation staff, how many employees were reassigned for a breach of the APS Code of Conduct?

Breaches of Code of Conduct for Ministerial staff

F 62 – Finance – Senator Ryan

- a) In relation to the Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff, were any of the Minister for Finance and Deregulation's staff investigated for breaching the Code of Conduct for Ministerial Staff?
- b) If so, were any breaches recorded and what was the breach?

Procurement

F 63 – Finance – Senator Ryan

Please provide an update on the standardised contract arrangements for procurement that the Department is undertaking.

- a) Has a standard contract for procurement been developed yet?
- b) If not, why not and what is the expected timing?
- c) Will there be a standard contract for procurement available for business to use?
- d) If there will be, when will it be available for business to use? How will business access it? Will it be available to all business to use?

F 64 – Finance – Senator Ryan

At the Supplementary Budget Estimates 2009-10 in October 2009, Mr David Tune spoke about developing a procurement tool-kit with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research for best practice benchmarks for agencies and case studies for successful procurement.

- a) Can you give an update on this?

- b) Is it available for business yet? If not, why not and what is the expected timing.
- c) How will business access it?
- d) Will it be available to all businesses to use?

Minister for Sport

F 65 – Finance – Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Minister Ellis hosted a meeting of Commonwealth Sports Minister meeting in Beijing in 2008.

- a) Please provide a detailed itinerary of the Minister's visit and the meetings she held and with who she met?
- b) Please provide the total expenditure for the Minister's visit and meetings in Beijing?

BRCWG

F 66.1 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

- a) Outline the structure of the COAG Business Regulation & Competition Work Group (BRCWG)
- b) How many members are on the group?
- c) How many times has the BRCWG convened?

F 66.2 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

Who appoints the members of the group?

F 66.3 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

- a) What are the sub-groups of the main Business Regulation & Competition Work Group?
- b) Outline the sub-groups' purpose and the members of these sub-groups.

F 67 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

The Working Group considered over 35 possible areas of reform where progress against the objectives relating to improving Australia's competitiveness, productivity and work place mobility could be made in 2008 and decided that 27 areas of reform should be included in the implementation program.

- a) What were the areas of reform that were not included in the implementation program, and why were they not included?
- b) How was it decided not to include these 'possible' areas of reform in the implementation program?
- c) What input/role did the Finance and Small Business Ministers have in deciding what areas of reform are to be included and what areas have been excluded?
- d) Please outline the status of the harmonisation of OH&S laws and the timeframes involved.

F 68 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

Outline the progress that has been made in each of the further 12 areas identified as existing ‘hotspots’ and new areas of reform where the BRCWG recommended there should be early action. These areas included;

- a) Environmental assessment and approvals bilaterals,
- b) Payroll tax administration,
- c) Trade licences,
- d) A Health Workforce IGA,
- e) National trade measurement,
- f) Rail safety regulation reform,
- g) The consumer policy framework,
- h) Product safety,
- i) Trustee companies,
- j) Mortgage credit and advice,
- k) Margin lending,
- l) And non-deposit taking institutions.

F 69 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

What progress has been made in ‘accelerating the five remaining COAG ‘hotspots’;

- a) Development assessment,
- b) Building regulation,
- c) Chemicals and plastics regulatory reform,
- d) ABN and business names registration, and
- e) Personal Property Securities reform.

F 70 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

Of the nine areas that were identified (see below) as possible additions to the COAG’s regulation framework program, out time their status.

- a) Standard business reporting,
- b) Food regulation,
- c) A national mine safety framework,
- d) Electronic conveyancing,
- e) Upstream petroleum (oil and gas) regulation,
- f) Maritime safety,
- g) Wine labelling,
- h) Directors’ liabilities, and
- i) Financial service delivery.

F 71 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

For the areas that have not been added to the regulation program detail why they have not been included, and the possibility of their inclusion in the future.

Best practice processes for regulation making and review**F 72 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson**

The BRCWG stated *‘ensuring that the costs of both new and existing regulations are minimised is vital to reducing costs to businesses and consumers and to promoting improvements in Australia’s productivity and competitiveness. This can be done by undertaking robust gate keeping and impact assessment on the flow of new regulations and by also reviewing the stock of existing regulation.’*

What impact analysis has been commissioned to date to ensure a robust gate keeping process to ensure the costs of both new and existing regulation are minimised to ensure reduced costs to businesses and consumers and to promote improvements in Australia’s productivity and competitiveness?

F 73 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

Under National Reform Agenda (NRA) initiatives agreed by COAG in April 2007, *‘jurisdictions are committed to maximising the efficiency of regulation, including, including through establishing gate keeper mechanisms, improving the quality of impact analysis, better measurement of compliance costs, undertaking annual reviews to reduce the burden of regulation and working with the PC on its benchmarking study into the compliance cost of regulation.’*

- a) How many new regulations have been implemented since the election of the Rudd Labor Government and how many regulations have been replaced by these new regulations that have been introduced?
- b) What cost benefit analysis has been used to maximise the efficiency of each of the regulation?
- c) What metrics are used to measure compliance costs of new regulation?
- d) What annual reviews have been undertaken to reduce the burden of regulation?

Competition reform**F 74 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson**

‘A further task of the BRCWG is to ensure effective implementation of competition reforms agreed by COAG under the NRA.’

- a) What competition reforms have been agreed to by COAG under the NRA?
- b) What competitions reforms that have been agreed to by COAG under the NRA that have been implemented, and what has been the date of implementation?
- c) What are the current time frames for the implementation of the competition reforms that have been agreed to by COAG under the NRA?
- d) What cost benefit analysis has been used to measure the financial impact of each of the competition reforms agreed to COAG under the NRA?

F 75 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

The BRCWG was to report to COAG by the end of 2008 on new areas of competition reform, these included;

- Appropriate models for future regulation of national markets such as for water trading, the energy market, consumer policy and regulation affecting national workforce mobility,
- Unfinished National Competition Policy business, and

- Other new competition reforms.
- a) When did BRCWG report to COAG on these new areas of competition reform?
- b) And what is the status of these areas of competition reform?

Performance information

F 76 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

Since the election of the Rudd Labor Government, what new regulations have been implemented and what pieces of regulation have been replaced by this new regulation?

F 77 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

How does the Department measure over all regulatory and compliance burdens imposed on the economy and small to medium size business.

F 78 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

- a) What metrics are used to support claims of comparative regulatory burdens over time?
- b) What do these measures say about the regulatory burden measured at November 2007, November 2008, November 2009 and forecasts for November 2010 based on Federal Government policy actions?

F 79 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

- a) How do the regulatory burden metrics take account of the complexity of regulatory requirements?
- b) Fewer provisions or regulatory text may mask a greater compliance requirement involving more effort or less clear statements involving objective interpretation concepts that demand expert advice or uncertain operational implications. How is this implementation burden taken into account?

F 80 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

Has the Department considered a publicly reported practitioners input assessment as part of its regulation design and development process?

F 81 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

- a) Has the Department considered the benefits of having regulatory impact statements prepared by a dedicated and independent government agency rather than the proponent of the regulation?
- b) If not, why not?

News clips

F 82 – Finance – Senator Ronaldson

- a) Does the Department provide any news clips to the Leader of the Opposition?
- b) Did the previous Government provide news clips to Labor Leader of the Opposition?
- c) What is the annual cost to the Department for the Prime Minister's news clipping services?

- d) What is the annual cost to the Department for the Prime Minister's requests for transcripts?

Hospitality

F 83 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) What is the Department's hospitality spend FYTD?
- b) Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.
- c) For each Minister/Par Sec's office, please detail total hospitality spend FYTD.
- d) Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of each event.

Freedom of Information

F 84 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) Has the Department/agency received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
- b) How many FOI requests has the Department received?
- c) How many have been granted or denied?
- d) How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

Community Cabinets

F 85 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) What was the cost of Ministers travel and expenses for the Community Cabinet meetings held since Budget Estimates?
- b) How many Ministerial Staff and Departmental officers travelled with the Minister for the Cabinet meeting?
- c) What was the total cost of this travel?
- d) What was the total cost to the Department and the Ministers office?

Reviews

F 86 – Finance – Senator Barnett

- a) How many Reviews are currently being undertaken in the portfolio/agency or affecting the portfolio agency?
- b) When will each of these reviews be concluded?
- c) Which Reviews have been completed since Budget Estimates?
- d) When will the Government be responding to the respective reviews that have been completed?
- e) What is the total number of Reviews *both completed and ongoing* in the portfolio/agency or affecting the portfolio agency since November 2007?
- f) What is the estimated cost of these Reviews?
- g) What further reviews are planned for 2009 - 10 FY?

Electronically Assisted voting (EAV)

F 87 – AEC – Senator Siewert

The 2007 Joint standing committee on electoral matters (JSCEM) recommendation to discontinue EAV for Australian voters who are blind or vision impaired. If cost is to be the deciding factor on political participation, what is the defining cost and who determines that cost?

F 88 – AEC – Senator Ronaldson

- a) Do you have any plans for the amalgamation of Divisional Offices over the next 12 months?
- b) If so, which offices?

F 89 – AEC – Senator Ronaldson

What program of consultation do you have with the organisations of the political parties for the next twelve months?

F 90 – AEC – Senator Ronaldson

Following the Government decision to terminate the electronic voting trial for and for Australian Defence personnel overseas, what work has been undertaken to ensure that our service men and women are enabled and encouraged to vote at the next election?

F 91 – Finance – Senator Birminham

Transferred from DCC (part b of CC32)

What action has been taken in regard to the following 2007 Labor election commitments:

- b) Half of all Commonwealth car fleet to be environmentally friendly by 2020.