

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates 13-16 Feb 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.4 Support Services for Government Operations

Topic: Australia Day Function - PMO staff present

Senator: Senator Brandis

Question reference number: 3

Type of Question: FPA, P58, 13 February

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 March 2012

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator BRANDIS: I am going to proceed with the sequence of events. We know the riot occurred. With the exception of questions put to the Prime Minister by journalists at four press conferences, two of them brief doorstops- at the first of which the Prime Minister denied, by the way, any knowledge of these events, so that is hardly relevant and with the exception of assertions made in the House of Representatives, which are not accurate by reference to at least some of the versions of events given by Kim Sattler, this is the first occasion on which the opposition has had the opportunity, through you, to ask these detailed questions of the Prime Minister. I do not expect you to have direct knowledge of some of the matters concerning which I have asked you, although I did give you notice that I would be exploring this with you today. You may wish to take some of the matters that I am about to turn to on notice and come back to us with a detailed answer. Is it not the case that at 2:57 on the afternoon of Australia Day the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Mr Hubbard, sent a text message to the Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff, Peta Credlin, which read, "Is TA okay after that madness?" to which, about an hour and a half later, he received the response, "All good; hope your boss is okay too"? Can you just satisfy yourself and confirm? you will obviously have to take that on notice that the exchange took place.

Senator Chris Evans: Yes, I have no knowledge of that but I am happy to take that on notice. I am sure your source is Ms Credlin, and in my dealings with her she has always been very professional.

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Answer:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is advised there was a text message exchange involving the Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff to the Leader of the Opposition on the afternoon of 26 January 2012. The Department is not privy to the content of the private communication.