

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Additional Estimates Hearing—February 2013

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Fax Machines**
Question: **108**
Hansard Reference: **p29, 11 February 2013**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 April 2013

Senator RYAN: ... We have moved from physical fax machines to an electronic service—is that throughout all the building now?

Ms Mills: I believe so. Can I ask the CIO to answer that.

Ms Seittenranta: With the new electronic fax solution that is available to a subset of the users of the building, my understanding is that there is a large number of areas who still use physical fax machines.

Senator RYAN: Is there a reason for that? Have areas been able to opt out of the electronic system?

Ms Seittenranta: That project predated my coming, so I am not sure how the requirements and the user base were established. I would have to take that on notice.

Senator RYAN: I would appreciate it if you would, and why some people are not using it—whether it is an opt-out or whether they were never included in the first place.

...

Senator RYAN: Is there consideration being given to not having a one-system-down, all-systems-down fail? ...

There is now no redundancy, I suppose.

Ms Mills: We would be very happy to find out, as the chief information officer said.

CHAIR: In relation to the fax ... So what I am asking is: is there an opportunity for an opt-out of the new version? If you could take that on notice and come back to us, that would be great.

Ms Mills: Certainly.

Answer

Q: Are all fax machines in APH on the new electronic Fax service?

A: No, the new fax service, RightFax, has only been rolled out to the Department of the Senate (Senate), all Senators' suites excluding Ministers, the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR), and all Members' suites excluding Ministers.

The Ministerial wing, DPS and the PBO have not been moved to this service.

Q: Is there a reason for the change?

A: The Senate raised a customer request (CR-08-071) in February 2008, to implement a network fax solution, in conjunction with the rollout of the Multi-Function Devices (MFDs), which replaced the fax machines, scanners and printers in each office.

The resulting project was jointly funded by the Senate (10%), DHR (20%) and DPS (70%).

Q: Why some people are not using it—whether it is an opt-out or whether they were never included in the first place?

A: The chamber departments selected which devices were in the scope of works.

The Department of the House of Representatives informally allowed Members to opt out and three Members chose to do this.

The Department of the Senate did not give an opt-in/opt-out option.

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Q: If the email system went down, would the fax system go down as well?

A: The individual Senators' and Members' fax accounts are configured to receive a fax as an email, a printed copy or both. If the Email system failed, faxes converted to emails would not be received. The fax would be stored in the RightFax gateway and could be recovered when the Email system is restored. The sending of faxes would not be affected. Please note that there are many redundancy layers in the Email system and a total failure is highly unlikely.

Q: Is there consideration being given to not having a one-system-down, all-systems-down fail?

A: It is DPS's preference not to have a one-system-down-all-systems-down configuration. Investigations into the delays in faxing in February have identified areas of the RightFax system that have a single point of failure. Options to address this are being prepared.

Q: Is there an opportunity for an opt-out of the new version?

A: The transmission of the faxes was moved from telephone lines to the Parliamentary Computing Network (PCN) to achieve efficiency of service, reduce and consolidate hardware costs and to prepare for a future replacement of the telephone system.

The old fax machines that have been removed from the suites have, or will be, disposed. Moving from a telephone fax service to a fax-to-email or scan-to-email service is the preferred service model. Should a Senator or Member wish to opt out, a replacement stand-alone fax machine would have to be purchased and installed.