

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Finance and Administration

Budget Estimates Hearing – May 2006

Question: F24

Outcome 3, Output 3.1

Topic: Mobile Phones for Senators and Members

Hansard Page: F&PA10

Senator Macdonald asked:

Thanks, that has been helpful. For those for whom you pay for the mobile phones, I would like to get a confirmation in writing in relation to members and senators including all those in minor parties. None of the minor parties' leaders or deputy leaders has special status, you are telling me, so what I need is your assurance, on confirmation, that they get two phones, the same as everyone else. ... Okay. So that makes it easy: will you just confirm that no-one is getting more than two mobile phones? That is all. Take it on notice.

Answer:

Under the head of authority provided by Item 7, Part 1, Schedule 1 of the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990*, the Special Minister of State has used his discretion to approve the allocation of two (2) mobile phones to each Senator and Member. One (1) of these mobile phones is for the personal use of the Senator or Member and the other is for electorate office use.

However, more than the two (2) mobile phones are provided to Senators and Members and their staff in the following circumstances:

- (a) Under the head of authority provided by Item 7, Part 1, Schedule 1 of the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990*, the Special Minister of State has used his discretion to approve an additional mobile phone for Members with a second electorate office. Seven (7) mobile phones are currently allocated under this provision.
- (b) Under the head of authority provided by Clauses 5.1 to 5.3 of Remuneration Tribunal Determination 2005/09, the Special Minister of State has used his discretion to approve the allocation satellite mobile phones, as part of the private-plated vehicle entitlement, to particular Senators and Members with a proven need to travel in rural and regional electorates with poor CDMA mobile phone coverage and relevant occupational health and safety concerns. Thirteen (13) Members have been provided with a satellite phone under this

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provision; and

- (c) Under the head of authority provided by the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations 1997, the Special Minister of State has also used his discretion to approve the allocation of mobile phone services for use by the personal staff of:
- an independent Senator or Member (the definition of which includes a Senator or Member who represents a political party which has less than five (5) members in the Parliament such as members of the Australian Democrats, the Australian Greens and the Family First Party). Twelve (12) mobile phones are currently allocated under this provision;
 - the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives. Fifty (50) mobile phones are currently allocated under this provision;
 - the Leader of The Nationals in the Senate. Seven (7) mobile phones are currently allocated under this provision; and
 - the Leader of a recognised, non-government, minority party of at least five (5) members in the Parliament. There are currently no minority parties with five (5) or more members in the Parliament, so there are no mobile phones allocated under this provision.