



Australian Government
Department of Finance and Deregulation



Reference: #reference#
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Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Finance
and Public Administration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Palethorpe

Senate Estimates Hearing of 28 and 29 May 2008 - Corrections

In my evidence before Senate Estimates Finance and Public Administration Committee on Wednesday 28 May 2008 I was asked two relevant questions in relation to the engagement of Mr Donald for the audit of the Northern Land Council:

A) Page 90

Senator ABETZ: Where did his name come from? The Minister for Indigenous Affairs?

Mr Plowman: His name was suggested through the office.

B) Page 91

Senator ABETZ: How many names were submitted to you by the Indigenous Affairs Minister for you to choose from?

Mr Plowman: There was only one suggestion but it was a suggestion around qualifications and experience. I also contacted Mr Donald myself. I talked to Mr Donald myself. Mr Donald is a lawyer. I felt I needed a lawyer.

In relation to Question A while I responded that the name was provided through the Minister's office I did not advise how I came to receive the name. The name was provided to me by an officer of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. He advised me that the name had been suggested from the Office of the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). I provide this same response to a Question on Notice.

In relation to Question B the first part of my response needs expansion. Prior to being requested formally to undertake the audit, I was contacted by telephone by an officer of FaHCSIA and asked if the Office of Evaluation and Audit (Indigenous Programs) would be able to undertake such an audit. The officer provided the names of three people who that Department considered would be suitable to undertake the audit. We briefly discussed the names. These did not include Mr Donald.

It was my understanding that these names had not been recommended by the Minister's Office but had been considered by FaHCSIA officers. However, I was consequently advised in a further call that one was not available. I also considered that the other two, although very well experienced did not have the land council knowledge and Indigenous experience necessary for the role and I did not follow them up.

Should you require any further information in relation to this matter please do not hesitate to contact me on 6215 2261.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Plowman', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Colin Plowman
Director of Evaluation and Audit
Financial Management Group
21 August 2008