

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012

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: Prime Minister’s spouse/partner – support staff

Senator: Fifield

Question reference number: 35

Type of question: Hansard, p 82, 23 May

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 8 July 2011

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator FIFIELD: Have been, previous to this, dedicated staff members in the Prime Minister's office to provide support to the prime ministerial spouse?

Mr Terrell: I will have to take that on notice. I am not familiar with what has happened previously.

Senator FIFIELD: If you could, thank you.

Mr Lewis: I can think of one particular case where that was so. But to get a fuller answer we would have to check it out.

Answer:

While the department does not hold details about the staff employed in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (the MOPS Act), it has been a longstanding practice for the spouse or partner of the Prime Minister, when on official duties, to be allocated assistance from a member of the PMO (from within the Prime Minister’s staffing allocation).

Since the enactment of the MOPS Act, partners’ assistants have been employed under that Act, either on a full-time or part-time basis, depending on preference. Mrs Keating, Mrs Hawke and Mrs Fraser all had full time assistance. Ms Rein and Mrs Howard had part-assistance as required as does Mr Mathieson.