

## Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates Hearing 21-24 May 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1.1 Domestic Policy

**Topic:** CRC reports - Infrastructure Australia

**Senator:** Senator Ludlam

**Question reference number:** 12

**Type of Question:** FPA P91, 21 May 2012

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 6 July 2012

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

Senator LUDLAM: There are some interesting comments in there. At page 77-and this is probably about as sharply worded as these things are allowed to get-you discuss Infrastructure Australia and its status as an independent body that advises on infrastructure funding priorities. Then you note, "It is not clear how integral this advice is to Commonwealth government budget decision making." Can I read that as a criticism, veiled or otherwise, of Infrastructure Australia, which does have some systematic analysis or assessment process to benchmark projects against? You seem to be saying that you are not necessarily detecting its advice turning up in actual funding decisions by government.

Mr Elton: You are extending beyond my area of expertise. I have not had a direct role in this report. That is a question of detail that I am afraid I have to take on notice.

Senator LUDLAM: If you are taking it a notice, the question I will put to you is: what does the council suppose should be done about that? It is an observation that I would agree with, but then the question is: what do you do with that?

**Answer:**

The text on page 77 of the cities report refers to decision-making within government that occurs after Infrastructure Australia has given its advice. The statement reflects that the council did not have the benefit of access to a comparable level of information about Commonwealth Government infrastructure decision-making as it had about State and Territory decision-making. As a result, it was not clear how Infrastructure Australia's advice was reconciled with whole-of-government priorities.

The council does not provide policy advice and therefore cannot make any suggestions about what should be done about any of the matters it raises in its reports.