

## 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:** 1.1.3 Support Services for Government Operations

**Topic:** Foreign Minister - briefing to incoming minister

**Senator:** Senator Ryan

**Question reference number:** 54

**Type of Question:** FPA P25, 22 May 2012

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

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

Senator RYAN: Can you take on notice whether there was such an instruction from the Prime Minister's office to the department of foreign affairs along those lines?

Senator Chris Evans: Senator, I think the officers have said that there was no involvement at PM&C. I am not sure how they can help you. Is your question whether the Prime Minister instructed Foreign Affairs to brief him?

Senator RYAN: To brief him before his appointment as a senator or minister.

Senator Chris Evans: I can take that on notice. I suspect you will have more joy from Foreign Affairs in the sense of who briefed whom and on whose authority. I will take it on notice. I have no idea. It seems to me that it was probably handled inside the Foreign Affairs portfolio. I will take it on notice.

Ms Leon: I have some more information for you about the question of the timing of Mr Rudd's resignation letter, which I think will clear up the date and time question. Mr Rudd's letter was dated 22 February, but his request was that he relinquish the position 48 hours after his return, not 48 hours after the date of the letter. He returned to Australia, I think, on the 24th and his appointment was revoked effective the 26th.

Senator RYAN: Thank you very much, that is very helpful. That does clarify as I forgot the phrase "after his return." If I could turn to the government's habit of digging dirt, Senator Evans. Last year I asked you a question in the chamber regarding an article in the Australian on 9 March that alleged that the Caucus Committee Support and Training Unit was to form part of a new strategy unit in or answerable to the Prime Minister's office. I also asked: "If not, will the minister undertake to find out and come back to the Senate this afternoon?" In your answer, when you had a crack at me for not pursuing this at estimates prior to that, so I am pursuing it now, you said

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that you would be happy to find out and come back to me. I was wondering as we never heard back, what is the relationship between the Caucus Committee Support and Training Unit and the Prime Minister's office and was the point that it was either in or answerable to the Prime Minister's office in any way correct?

**Answer:**

1) The Prime Minister did not issue an instruction to the Department of **the** Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to this matter.

2) The Caucus Communications Team (CCT) is responsible to the Special Minister of State (SMOS). Questions about the CCT should be directed to **the SMOS** or the Department of Finance and Deregulation.