

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013-2014**

**Finance and Deregulation Portfolio**

**Department/Agency: Department of Finance and Deregulation**

**Outcome/Program: 3/3.1**

**Topic: Printing Entitlements – political material**

**Senator: Ronaldson**

**Question reference number: F33**

**Type of question: Hansard, F&PA Committee, Page 38, 30 May 2012**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 12 July 2013**

**Number of pages: 2**

**Question:**

**Senator RONALDSON:** I am asking you, Minister, does the government, and you as the responsible minister, think it is acceptable for someone to be using taxpayers' funds to peddle a deliberate lie? Yes or no.

**Senator Wong:** You cannot tell me how to answer a question. I make the point that the leaflet contains a number of factually correct, or politically arguable, propositions. I understand that your proposition is that the policy of the Liberal Party, which was to get rid of the changes to the tax-free threshold, was changed on budget-reply night and that this leaflet post-dates that. I will take that question on notice. But in terms of the department, I do not know if there is anything to add in terms of that process of consideration.

**Senator RONALDSON:** So, just to confirm with the department—

**Senator Wong:** I have just thrown to the department. Perhaps they could answer before you ask another question.

**Ms Moy:** The department has no role in censoring political material that is printed or communicated to constituents, neither by legislation nor process.

**Senator PRATT:** It is a shame because the Liberal Party puts a lot of crap in our letterboxes.

**Senator RONALDSON:** You know that your interventions are never terribly helpful, mainly for you, but certainly for the rest of us. Can I just get an overview? Can I be absolutely sure that the department has no ability to vet lies and misinformation? Is that right?

**Ms Moy:** The department has no role in censoring political information.

**Senator RONALDSON:** Minister can I confirm with you—because you refused to comment—that the government and you, as the responsible minister, believe it is acceptable for the member for Corangamite to distribute information which is deliberately a lie and deliberately misleading.

**Senator Wong:** No. I have said I would take the issue of the tax-free threshold component of this DL on notice.

**Senator RONALDSON:** Thank you.

**Answer:**

The department has no role in censoring political information. Parliamentarians are responsible for the content printed as a part of a Senator and Member's communications entitlement.

Investigating the issue of the tax-free component of this published material, as undertaken by the then Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, would be an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.