

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates Hearing 27 May-6 June 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

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

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Topic:** Security waivers for international staff

**Senator:** Senator Ryan

**Question reference number:** 45

**Type of Question:** FPA, Tuesday 28 May 2013, page 7

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

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

Senator RYAN: Okay. Ms Leon, first of all, the possibility that something may lead to speculation does not mean you have a right to not answer a question. Secondly, this has been a matter of public discussion; it has been in newspapers. Thirdly, I am not asking about anything to do with the process for this person's application, the content, or what this central agency is up to or how it operates. I am merely asking: has the department, has Dr Watt in whose authority it resides, granted more than one waiver? Is this person still awaiting a conclusion of a process?

Senator RYAN: I am not asking about the status of their clearance. That is a matter to go to this central vetting agency that I am not aware of. You are asserting that the department can circumvent the examination of its performance with respect to any one person merely because you are inventing a new ground upon which you can refuse to answer a question.

Ms Leon: I am happy to take the question on notice and refer it to the individual whose security clearance—

**Answer:**

Refer to the answer provided in question reference number 43.

A Limited Higher Access waiver is valid for a period of three months. Where a clearance process takes more than three months to complete, the Department will ensure an additional waiver is put in place. Where a new waiver is required, PM&C will initiate a process to ensure the Australian Government Security Vetting Agency (AGSVA) and the clearance candidate meets their respective obligations.