

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Program 1.1**

**Question No. 48**

**Senator Trood asked the following question at the hearing on 22 February 2011:**

**Senator TROOD**—Does that mean that that person or NGO agency will have some kind of formal arrangement with the Australian government?

**Mr Wilkins**—Yes. If you want to think of it this way, the way I try to think of it—but I am not sure that is the way the Ethiopians necessarily think of it—is that the person is more an agent than an outsourcing. I think other countries outsource it, in a sense, to NGOs. We are getting the message that they want somebody who is an ambassador or an agent on behalf of the Australian government rather than—

**Senator TROOD**—So do we have somebody who can fulfil that role?

**Mr Wilkins**—Yes, we do, apparently. I met a person who seemed to me okay who works at the moment for, I think, a US NGO in Ethiopia. He seemed like a fairly solid sort of character. I only met him briefly, but my people had extensive discussions with him, and I think we were thinking of using that individual.

**Senator TROOD**—Is that person now able to act on our behalf to further these matters?

**Mr Wilkins**—I am not sure whether we have finally concluded an arrangement with them; that is the only thing. I would have to take that on notice. But I thought we were getting there.

**Senator TROOD**—Perhaps you would take on notice—

**Mr Wilkins**—Sure.

**Senator TROOD**—whether or not an arrangement has been concluded between that person—are you able to tell us who that person is or the organisation with which they are connected?

**Mr Wilkins**—I might be able to. Can I take that on notice too?

**Senator TROOD**—Yes.

**Mr Wilkins**—There is a name of a person. I just do not want to mislead.

**Senator TROOD**—I am happy for you take that on notice.

**Mr Wilkins**—Under the circumstances, I think that would be a very bad thing to do.

**Senator TROOD**—I am happy for you to take that on notice and, simultaneously, whether or not you are now in a position to have that person act as we would hope they would be able to do on the subject.

**Mr Wilkins**—Yes, okay.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

Following discussions with Ethiopian authorities in December 2010, the Attorney-General's Department is establishing two formal arrangements to assist with the management of the Ethiopia-Australia Intercountry Adoption Program. First, the Department has engaged Ms Lemlem Fesseha as Australian program manager pending formal appointment as Australian representative. Second, the Department is engaging an experienced, Hague accredited adoption service provider to support Ms Lemlem through the provision of administrative and ancillary services in Ethiopia. The identity of the service provider cannot be disclosed publicly until the details of the engagement have been finalised.