

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

Group 3

Program 1.2

Question No. 48

Senator Cameron asked the following questions at the hearing on 18 November 2013:

I refer to the media release from the then Shadow Minister for Small Business dated 1 February 2013 titled "The Coalition's plan for small business emergency assistance" and the Coalition's Policy for Small Business dated August 2013.

- a) Has the AGD/EMA provided advice or had discussions with the Minister for Justice and/or Minister for Small Business, their offices or Treasury on implementing this policy? If so, when?
- b) Has the AGD received instructions from the Attorney General or Minister for Justice to introduce 'consequential effect' concessional loans to businesses in declared disaster arrears that are not eligible for existing relief loans and which can demonstrate that their business has experienced a significant financial downturn due to the disaster event as outlined in Section 17, page 12 of the August 2013 Policy?
- c) On what date did the AG/Minister for Justice so instruct?
- d) What is the current status and work underway to implement this policy?
- e) Are businesses consequentially affected by the recent bushfires in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Hawkesbury local government areas eligible under the Government's election commitment?

The answers to the honourable senator's questions are as follows:

- a) Yes. AGD commenced discussions with the office of the Minister for Justice and Australian, state and territory ('state') government stakeholder agencies on implementing the small business emergency assistance concessional interest rate loans from mid-September 2013.
- b) Yes.
- c) 2 October 2013.
- d) On 23 December 2013, the Minister for Justice wrote to state counterparts advising that the emergency assistance concessional interest rate loan was available to state and territory governments to offer in response to an eligible natural or non-natural disaster through Category B of the joint Commonwealth-State/Territory Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. The loan assistance can be made available to small businesses, primary producers and voluntary non-profit bodies in declared disaster areas that are not eligible for existing relief loans and that can demonstrate that their operations have experienced a significant financial downturn due to the disaster event. It is a matter for the state and territory governments to decide whether and when to implement the measure.

- e) Consistent with Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangement principles, it is a matter for the NSW Government to decide whether the new loans will be made available to small businesses, primary producers or voluntary non-profit bodies in bushfire affected areas.