

Questions on notice from the committee hearing into acquisition of land in relation to major transport projects - 18 March 2022

Question 1- page 3 of the transcript

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Under the existing arrangement the Valuer General is entitled to communicate directly with four executives?

STEWART McLACHLAN: I would need to take that on notice.

Answer (to be provided confidentially to the committee):

Formalised communication channels with the Valuer General were adopted during 2021. These arrangements have changed over time and the current arrangement is that the Valuer General can communicate directly with the following executives to undertake most operational matters that are then communicated to the relevant staff:

1. Executive Director, Property and Development
2. A/Executive Director, VGNSW

The Valuer General can also communicate directly with the following staff:

1. Principal Valuer - Rating and Taxing, VGNSW
2. Executive Officer to the Valuer General, VGNSW
3. Executive Assistant to the Valuer General, VGNSW
4. Principal Contract Manager, VGNSW

And with other staff when the above staff members are present.

Question 2- page 3 of the transcript

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Of course, we have to respect the privacy of the complainants and the nature of the complaints, but those complaints arose from the just acquisitions team in large part, is that correct?

STEWART McLACHLAN: I think I would need to take that on notice to answer that correctly.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Okay, sure. Are you in a position to tell us how many?

STEWART McLACHLAN: I am not. I would need to take that on notice.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Can you tell us when the last complaint was received?

STEWART McLACHLAN: That is something I would need to take on notice.

Answer (to be provided confidentially to the committee):

Issues have been raised in various contexts, by different sources, identifying interrelated and overlapping issues and involving different parties. It is not practical to provide a definitive answer to this question, and the Department will be providing a briefing to the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer General.

Question 3 - page 3 of the transcript

STEWART McLACHLAN: I started in the last week of November 2021.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Congratulations. Have you received complaints since you started?

STEWART McLACHLAN: I have not received any complaints from staff that I am aware of, but I would need to take it on notice to make sure that that is a correct answer.

Answer (to be provided confidentially to the committee):

I confirm that I have not received any complaints from VGNSW staff relating to the Valuer General's behaviour.

Question 4 - page 3 – 4 of the transcript

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: As I understand it from evidence that was given by one of the former secretaries of DPIE at a budget estimates hearing last year, there were investigations, were there not, undertaken into some complaints that were received as late as September last year?

STEWART McLACHLAN: Yes. There has been a WHS investigation. I think I would probably need to say that I am really keen, Mr Mookhey, to assist the Committee and provide all the evidence that I can. This question probably is going towards matters that are under active consideration, as I understand it, from another committee. I am aware that the joint standing committee has now written to the department asking for a briefing on these matters and that the department is in the process of facilitating that briefing. As these matters are particularly sensitive for all involved and airing them in a public forum raises questions of personal information protected by law, as well as those protections I went through earlier, I guess I would have to defer to those obligations that I previously raised and need to take the matter on notice if pressed.

Answer (to be provided confidentially to the committee):

Yes, I confirm there was an investigation which has now concluded.

Question 5 - page 4 of the transcript

STEWART McLACHLAN: The investigation has been completed. I am happy to answer that. As I understand it, the joint sitting committee has written to the department to seek a briefing on that investigation and that is in the process of being facilitated. I also understand that it is imminently being provided, if it has not already been provided, to the Minister.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: It has been provided to the Minister?

STEWART McLACHLAN: If it has not, it is in the process of being provided, but I can certainly follow that up this morning.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you.

Answer (to be provided confidentially to the committee):

The WHS report was provided to Minister Anderson on 25 March 2022 and arrangements are currently being made to brief the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer General on the findings of the investigation.