



SENATOR SCOTT LUDLAM
AUSTRALIAN GREENS
SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Senator Mathias Cormann
Minister for Finance
Suite MG70 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

cc:

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Minister for Urban Infrastructure

Mathias

Dear Minister

I write to you regarding your answer to a question taken on notice during the Finance Portfolio session of Additional Senate Estimates hearings. (Answer to Question F29 Attached)

My question was in relation to the Perth Freight Link, and in particular, the decision by your government to provide \$1.2 billion of commonwealth funding to this project.

I specifically asked you whether you or then Prime Minister Abbott had a completed business case or a cost benefit analysis at the time the funding commitment was made.

You answered "I will take on notice what specific documentation was in front of government."

This is a straightforward question and should not be difficult to answer, nor is it in the public interest to continue avoiding.

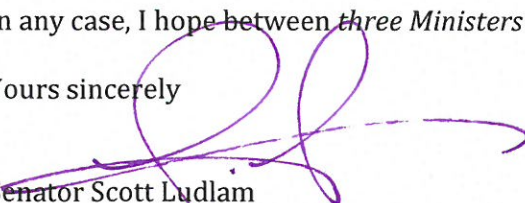
As you are aware, the Perth Freight Link has been the subject of two highly critical Senate Inquiries, with the most recent recommending that the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) conduct an audit of the Perth Freight Link project including whether appropriate steps were taken to protect the Commonwealth's interests and obtain value for money in respect to the \$1.2 billion in Commonwealth funding committed to the Western Australian government for the Perth Freight Link project, and political interference with the environmental assessment and compliance process.

We will continue to fight for transparency and accountability outcomes over the decisions you in capacity of Finance Minister, and your government made in relation to this catastrophic disaster of a project.

As you suggested in your answer, I have also written to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and the Minister for Urban Infrastructure; however I fail to see how this is anything more than yet another attempt at avoiding an answer, given my question was directed specifically to yourself in the capacity of Finance Minister, and as a Senator for WA who undoubtedly would have been directly involved in this decision.

In any case, I hope between ~~three~~ *three* Ministers I will receive a direct answer as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely


Senator Scott Ludlam
Deputy Leader, Australian Greens

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2016-17

Finance Portfolio
28 February 2017

Department/Agency: Finance
Outcome/Program: 2/2.1
Topic: Perth Freight Link

Senator: Ludlam

Question reference number: F29

Type of question: Hansard Proof, F&PA Committee, Page 65, 28 February 2017

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Thursday, 13 April 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator LUDLAM: When the funding commitment was made, did you or Prime Minister Abbott have a completed business case?

Senator Cormann: The process of assessment went through all of the appropriate channels. It was considered in the appropriate fashion.

Senator LUDLAM: I just asked a really direct question.

Senator Cormann: Of course, you have been pursuing, I think, six or seven orders through the Senate now.

Senator LUDLAM: And you have denied all of those.

Senator Cormann: That is not right. We have provided as much information as we could provide without harming the public interest.

Senator LUDLAM: I am not asking for documents here.

Senator Cormann: And, of course, including that part of the business case which could be publicly released and has been publicly released.

Senator LUDLAM: Yes. I understand that. Did you or the Prime Minister at the time, Mr Abbott, have those documents at the time the funding decision was made?

Senator Cormann: I will take on notice what specific documentation was in front of government.

Senator LUDLAM: How could you not know? Did you have a cost-benefit analysis?

Senator Cormann: You are obviously asking me questions now about 2014. I will take them on notice to make sure the answers I provide are 100 per cent accurate.

Answer:

Detailed questions concerning specific documents in front of Government should be referred to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and the Minister for Urban Infrastructure as the responsible Ministers.