

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PARLIAMENT

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
MONDAY, 21 MARCH 2016**

SESSION TWO

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Liz Behjat
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 2.47 pm**Hon HELEN MORTON****Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection, examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. I do not think I need to go through the "Information for Witnesses", because you are aware, and the importance of telling the truth to parliamentary committees. I will note that the hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It is also being broadcast live as we speak. The hearing is held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private either of its own motion or at the witness's request. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question.

I am sure you are aware that we are holding an inquiry into the provision of information to Parliament, particularly sections 81 and 82 of the FM act. We have a range of questions. I just wondered, before I start on those questions, whether you have any statements you would like to make to the committee.

Hon HELEN MORTON: No, thanks.

The CHAIR: To commence with, could you explain the process of advice you receive when considering the question of whether to disclose information to Parliament?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Explain the process of advice or just the process by which I answer questions?

The CHAIR: Yes; the process and the advice that you receive.

[2.50 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: The normal way that things happen is that obviously if it is a question on notice or a question without notice—if it is a question without notice of which some notice is given, usually they come in by around about 11 o'clock in the morning of the day that they are going to be required. That information then goes to the agency, and I would not necessarily know about that question at that stage. Sometime after that I might get—I do require that I get informed about the question that has been asked, even though the agency is now working on it. The information comes back to the ministerial office, to the staff. They then may require additional information. So, there might be a little bit of going backwards and forwards between the agency and the ministerial office. At that point in time, when they are reasonably satisfied with that information, it would come through to me. Often, because we are sitting in Parliament, as you know, I am frequently dealing with legislation or something else, so sometimes I do not get to see it until about five minutes before question time. Obviously, I try to make sure that I get as much time as possible to give due consideration to the answer. At that point, when I do see it, I would make a decision about whether the answer was the answer that I would give. Because the staff know that I am not likely to sign off on any old thing that is given to me, I might actually get variations on that information, with more or less information, depending on what is coming forward. I might require more information or clarity around certain things—going back to the agency—before I am prepared to sign off on it. That is the general sort of process on the days that we have questions without notice. When it is questions on notice, a somewhat similar process takes place before I see it, but given that it is usually not in that same time constraint as when Parliament is sitting, I will have it with me for

a day while I look through the answers. I might require additional information. Often there are notes attached to the information for me and I might require some of those notes to be brought forward and included in the answer so that whoever is asking the question gets the benefit of that. It is that sort of process. I do not know if that clarifies what you are looking for.

The CHAIR: That is good, but one of the things we are particularly focusing on is where there is a decision to disclose information or there is a question about whether information will be disclosed or withheld from the Parliament. Who would be the specific advisers you would rely on in that regard? Is it just your department and your staff in your office —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Mostly, yes.

The CHAIR: — or are there others that you would rely on?

Hon HELEN MORTON: No; sometimes we would get advice from SSO, for example. Whenever we get a question coming through in Mental Health, for example, where it is specific to an individual patient or a patient's family or something, they put a note across the top of information coming to me in my briefing matter on the particular matter, reminding me of the importance of privacy and confidentiality. The agency may be providing me with advice about the sensitivity of a particular matter, especially when it relates to an individual person's name and their family et cetera. It comes from a variety of sources.

The CHAIR: You talked about staff. Is your chief of staff intimately involved in that process or is it more generally the policy advisers?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The chief of staff would be involved in the majority, if not all, of the questions, but I can assure you that there is a lot of delegation. The policy advisers get those questions in the first instance; they go through to the agency. The parliamentary liaison officer is the person who, normally, physically brings the answers to me, either in a ministerial office or when I am sitting in Parliament. And then there are some of my requirements for additional information or clarity around certain things, which would be going backwards and forwards via parliamentary liaison officer to the agency or the chief of staff. Mostly, the chief of staff would have line of sight of it, but there may be times that that does not happen, especially for fairly straightforward answers.

The CHAIR: The Auditor-General, in a submission to us, listed the common reasons that a ministerial decision was not reasonable or appropriate under a section 82 notice. He said —

A feature of many of these decisions was a lack of sufficient consideration of the issues by the agency advising the Minister.

Given that comment, how confident are you in your advisers at an agency level that they are giving proper consideration to the issues? Do you have confidence in your agencies?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, absolutely. The reason I say that is because people would know my style is to provide as much information as possible. I take the responsibility seriously about providing information to Parliament, and there will be many times where the agency or my ministerial office have limited the amount of information that is going to be provided and I have gone back and said I want it provided and I want more of it provided, so people would add information, either from the briefing note I have and that I cannot see any reason that it should not be provided to whoever is asking the question. I think, over the years, people have got used to my style of answering questions.

The CHAIR: So they now know to provide as much as possible?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Absolutely.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I just ask on the type of question and, yes, sometimes that might provide full answers, but in the answer where the question is not actually answered, where there is

a kind of detailed explanation but that does not actually answer the question? Are you aware of those kind of circumstances and what do you think about those kind of responses?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It would be really good if you could give me an example of that, because I really do try to answer the questions. So, if you could give me an example.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So, where a general response is given rather than a specific response—I am speaking generally—to the question, a more kind of effusive answer, a fuller answer, that is perhaps not required and a more straightforward answer would suffice.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Again, I say that I like to provide as much information as possible to people because often the context of the answer is important for people. I know from a political sense that often if you just give a yes or no, for example, that is what runs off on Twitter or something the next day. Whereas, if you have actually got it in the context of that bigger response, then it makes sure that if people are going to make use of that—I am happy for people to make use of the information; I understand the political processes around what we are doing—but please put it into context. That is really what that more fulsome response is about, making sure that people get the bigger context in which that answer is being provided.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Describing the process that you undertake in deciding which answers should go ahead and which require more work, do you also have a kind of political layer in that process or level of thinking?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is about making sure that however that information is going to be used by the person who has asked the question that it is put into context. If you call that political, then that is your say so, but what I am saying is that giving a fulsome answer is about making sure that the answer that is given is given in a way that cannot be taken out of context.

[3.00 pm]

The CHAIR: You did touch upon this in some of your earlier answer, but I also wanted to give you an opportunity to comment. The Auditor General also expressed concern about inadequate documentation maintained by agencies to support advice given to ministers and on occasions by inadequate explanation given as to why information should not be provided. What is your experience in regards to that comment? Inadequate documentation being maintained by agencies to support the advice they give you to withhold information, or inadequate explanation being given as to why information should not be provided. Have you ever had experience of that as a minister?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do not know what actually happens beyond the information, at an agency level, around how they manage or record or maintain their own briefing notes around providing information to me, but it is a practice of ours, and I am not talking just about answer to Parliament at this stage. I do not, for example, sign off a single letter unless I have got a briefing note that sits behind it. Every time I sign a letter, I am actually reading about eight or nine pieces of paper because not only is the briefing note specific to this occasion, but other briefing notes that might relate to it as well—so that at all times I am able to see the context of which I am responding to somebody or something. When an answer comes up from a question on notice, a similar approach is taking place, unless it is absolutely straightforward in that people do not require to give me that level of briefing note around it. But I get briefing notes sitting behind most information that I actually have to respond to.

The CHAIR: Okay, thank you. Is there any internal documentation that you are given to assist you to make a decision? For example, does such documentation define commercial-in-confidence, commercially sensitive or public interest? Do you have any documentation that you can use as a template or to help you make decisions around those issues about what should or should not be disclosed? Do you have any sort of set of principles that you rely on that are written down?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do not know that I have actually had to deal with anything to that degree. I know I had a document somewhere or other that the Auditor General has put out—I think

it was the SSO—a document in 2011; that was, the State Solicitor's Office prepared a document in March 2011 to give ministers and staff some support.

The CHAIR: Was that to help you identify what are the issues in deciding those issues?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, but it is not something that we have had a great deal of involvement with. It has only recently come to my attention. But that information around the requirements and the act for commercial-in-confidence—I actually always believed it to be more specific to commercial-in-confidence, but since this hearing has been called and I have gone back and had a look at the act, of course it is broader than commercial-in-confidence.

The CHAIR: Yes, it is very broad.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes. It sort of makes me realise that there are probably other times, other than when something is commercially confidential, that people need to have a broader understanding of that.

The CHAIR: Obviously in your portfolio an obvious one is the issues around protection of the confidentiality of patients or clients of your agencies.

Hon HELEN MORTON: But I understand from the guidelines also that the information that is being requested has to respond very much to the Financial Management Act, so the names of individuals, for example, are excluded from that process.

The CHAIR: Well, it goes to the operations of the agency.

Hon HELEN MORTON: If people ask me for the names of individuals or the names of families or personal details about matters to do with individual people, that is not a matter that is related to the Financial Management Act.

The CHAIR: I do not want to get into a debate about the act, but I can envisage there would be reasonable grounds for upholding that in many circumstances. Again, are there a set of principles, as such, that you rely upon? Obviously now you have got that document, that would be the document that you would use?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Look, it is something that I would make sure that we as a ministerial office are more aware of, and I know that the office has requested even a further training process with the State Solicitor's Office around it. But I think that they are used to, as I call it, my "style", or whatever you want to call it, that if there is no good reason not to provide that information, then provide it.

The CHAIR: When decisions are being made—I hear your last comment—is there any weight given to the positive impacts of disclosure? I heard your last comment, but I guess the question I have is: is there any weight given to the positive impacts of disclosure?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Again, do not forget that I have been on this committee on the other side of where I am sitting right now and have also experienced some of the difficulty in getting good information that is not irrelevant to the work of the committee. It is a common practice of mine to provide as much good information as possible, and I would say that there would be very few times that I have not disclosed information—very few.

The CHAIR: In terms of when contracts or other processes are being established, at the starting point of those, do you ever look at the issue of what you can do to ensure information can be disclosed at a later point in time to Parliament if it is asked for? Is that something that you have ever given consideration to when you are dealing with your agencies to be making sure that whatever they do, they understand the need to be making sure that information can be disclosed to Parliament at some point in the future? Is that something you have ever given consideration to?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is not something that I have pursued with the agencies.

The CHAIR: All right. I think you have answered this one. When you are looking at any matter, you decide it on a case-by-case basis or generically?

Hon HELEN MORTON: No, it is definitely a case-by-case basis, but I would just repeat that, generically, when a mental health individual patient's information is being sought, I get a standard response at the front of that briefing note that warns me and reminds me of my obligations around confidentiality and privacy. I would say that, generically, people working in my office would understand and people working in my agencies would understand that my objective is to provide as full a response to questions as is feasibly possible.

The CHAIR: But if you ever reach the point where you are making a decision not to provide that information, what are the relevant or irrelevant considerations that you take into account? When I say irrelevant—what do you consider are the relevant considerations and what would you consider would be completely irrelevant for you to consider when deciding to make something public?

Hon HELEN MORTON: As I say, that would be on a case-by-case basis at that stage. If we make the assumption that everything should be provided if it is possible, the things then that you would start to not provide for are around privacy and confidentiality to an individual patient and their family's personal business. I think the other area is where the requirement, the request for information, is so onerous that it is just going to take an inordinate amount of agency time to try to pull individual files and find out some piece of information across five years, if you know what I mean. That sort of requirement of information being requested of an agency becomes too onerous and too resource intensive to ask them to pursue that, so that is another example.

The CHAIR: But what about in terms of the drafting of contracts, do you see any reason why—there is always a debate about during the negotiation period—contracts could not be made public once they have been finally signed in your agencies?

[3.10 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: A lot of our contracts are on the public record anyway. I am just thinking about the way the Mental Health Commission goes about contracting with non-government organisations or with the health department around the financial allocations to them and the requirements for services. I would have thought that most of that is in the public interest anyway and gets provided to the extent that that information is available. Sometimes people ask for information that is beyond the Mental Health Commission and my own ability to access. I am using, for example, the information for health, which then goes and subcontracts further. That might be information that I would not have necessarily access to. Similarly with the Disability Services Commission, I would have thought that most of their work is contracted out.

The CHAIR: Is it an automatic thing, though, that the agency makes them public? How are they made public? You say they are in the public domain, but how are they made public—those contracts?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do not know if they are automatically in the public domain, but that information is frequently asked for and given. Annual reports, for example, would have information around those things. I just recall there having been many questions asked to list all of the different agencies that have got contracts with either of my child protection or mental health or disability services—what level of services they provide, how much funding they get for each one of them—and that information, you know, is not something that you would get back in a three-hour time frame, but a question on notice will always get answered to that respect.

The CHAIR: With something like that, if a member asked for the contract that people might have with a number of those agencies, would you see any reason —

Hon HELEN MORTON: The actual contract itself?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I have got a feeling that we have actually provided that from time to time. It covers off on things like the quality and the safety requirements—their reporting requirements. I think that at any particular time that information is probably available, and I do not know whether it has ever been asked for and not provided. I seriously have not got that at my fingertips.

The CHAIR: Do you want to take that on notice and see if there are any —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Any times we have been asked a question —

The CHAIR: Yes, and not provided it.

Hon HELEN MORTON: In the last five years?

The CHAIR: Well —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can you narrow it down just a little bit?

The CHAIR: In what you think is a reasonable time frame would be easy enough—on what would be a reasonable time frame.

Hon HELEN MORTON: If we have ever been asked to provide contract information and have not provided it?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can we say in the last 12 months?

The CHAIR: Yes, and if it was not provided, the reasons why you did not provide it—so if you can give us an explanation as to the process and the reasons.

[Supplementary Information No B1.]

The CHAIR: In that circumstance, if you were asked to make some information public, how influential would be a written request from the other contracting party for confidentiality be in terms of your decision-making process?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Before I answer that, I will just go back a little bit. The other area is where it is cabinet-in-confidence. If there is some information that is currently before cabinet or being developed up as part of a cabinet decision, for example, that is another area where if a request had been put through at a time that that was still being developed up for cabinet decision, that would not be provided in the process of that. So the last question about the other contracting party —

The CHAIR: If there was a request to table a contract, how influential would a written request from the party that is the contractor to the government be?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Okay. I would always read or listen—or however that information came to me—I would always listen or read what their concern might be. But I am very clear about the role of Parliament as being a body to which government is accountable, and if there is no good reason not to provide that information, then it should be provided.

The CHAIR: With the next question, I am happy if you say you want to take it on notice to get your agencies' advice in terms of a more full answer, but to the best of your knowledge, do any of your agencies ever insist on confidentiality in their contracts? I realise there will be confidentiality in terms of protecting the names of clients and things like that, but in terms of details about the contract or other areas where you request confidentiality —

Hon HELEN MORTON: I could not tell you off the top of my head if there are any occasions of that, but I would say, as a general understanding, most agencies would fully understand that they are about to receive public funds, taxpayers' funds, for providing a service on behalf of the

government, and as a response it would become public knowledge around that. So if there is anything in the—you are obviously not referring to making individual person's information public?

The CHAIR: There are things that are requirements under the act that I imagine you would also include in your contracts to say you shall not divulge the name of your clients —

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is right. But that is not what you are referring to, is it?

The CHAIR: No. I am talking about more general provision of the contract—the performance standards, the contract rates and the outcomes that are expected out of the contract. Are you aware of any circumstances where the state has requested that that be kept confidential?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am not aware of any. I am more than happy to check out if there is such. But I am not aware of any.

The CHAIR: Or where the agency has requested it and you have agreed to it.

[Supplementary Information No B2.]

The CHAIR: Again, I think we have probably covered it, but once a contract has been completed or an arrangement terminated, is it ministerial or departmental practice to disclose that information?

Hon HELEN MORTON: On a website, you mean, or in some way like that?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: What was the first part?

The CHAIR: Once a contract has been completed or an arrangement terminated, is there any way that you are able to report or release information?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Again, I do not know if it is ever done on a routine for every occasion, but there have certainly been occasions where questions have been asked of me around the completion of a contract or the termination of a contract, and the reasons for it, and that information has been provided through the process of questions. I do not know if, for example, those things happen on a routine basis on a website or something of that nature.

The CHAIR: All right. Are you aware of any cases where commercial-in-confidence information has been inadvertently disclosed and where a party has suffered some disadvantage from that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: At all, you mean?

The CHAIR: Yes, within your ministerial —

Hon HELEN MORTON: In my ministerial —

The CHAIR: If you want to go back to your time as a public servant, I am happy for you to do that!

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am not, but that does not mean to say that it might not have happened. It is just that I cannot bring it to my mind at the moment.

The CHAIR: The Auditor General has commented publicly that providing information to a parliamentary committee, even with a request that it be kept confidential, requires the minister to relinquish responsibility to that committee for the confidentiality of that information. What is your view on that comment?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can you just say the first part of that again?

The CHAIR: That providing information to a parliamentary committee, even with a request that it be kept confidential, requires the minister to relinquish responsibility to that committee for the confidentiality of that information.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes. Obviously that has come to my mind at times when this committee, I think, or it might have been another committee, has asked me a question, and that was specifically around the selection or the criteria used by the combined assessment panel with regard to me

disclosing what the selection criteria are for that particular panel, and me not being willing to do so. If, for example, the Legislative Council committee had said to me that they would maintain the confidentiality of that, there is no reason why—I would be more than happy to provide that information. But given that at no time would the committee guarantee the confidentiality of that information, I was not prepared to hand it over.

[3.20 pm]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So thinking about it the other way, if a question is asked of you or a contract has been requested by the committee, would you think of, or have you thought of, providing the information with the request to keep it private as well as providing, say, it is a contract, the same information redacted? Have you ever thought of doing that or are you aware that is a possibility?

Hon HELEN MORTON: To the best of my knowledge, I have never been asked for a contract like that. The only time I am referring to is where I was sitting here and having a question asked of me around the selection criteria for the combined application process and —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Did you think at the time it would be possible to provide the information to the committee but to request the committee to keep it private?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I cannot recall the discussion at that time, but I made it very clear that the reason I was not providing it is because the committee would not give me the guarantee that it would be kept confidential—and the whole purpose of this thing's operation and its effectiveness in the way that it is operating is because it is not public knowledge about how that is undertaken. So, if the committee ever were to say to me, "We give you a 100 per cent guarantee that that information will be kept private", that information I expect could be found. But in the absence of that, and also knowing that even when you begin these hearings off you start with a preamble that tells us that I can ask for information to be made private but I cannot have it guaranteed that it would be remaining private, so I do not know what else you could say or do under those circumstances.

The CHAIR: Look, I mean, the reality is even as a committee, we can give a commitment that we are not going to make it public, but there is nothing to stop the house making it public, so I understand that. As you mentioned earlier, you have been a member of this committee. I am not aware of any time this committee for as long as I have been a member, which is some time —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Some may say too long!

The CHAIR: Yes, probably me! We have never released information when a minister has asked for it to be kept confidential. Even where we believe there is a public benefit in releasing it, we have always sought to call ministers in and negotiate that, often in private hearings, to see if we can come to some agreed process for releasing it. To the best of my knowledge, I cannot recall this committee ever releasing any documentation that has been requested to be kept private. Accepting that we cannot give a formal commitment that we do not make it public without having a—in many cases, I think you would have sat here with Norman Moore on one occasion where we negotiated an agreement that certain elements be made public and others be kept confidential. Is that not something that would give you some comfort in those matters?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Not sufficient comfort, given the importance that this particular mechanism has to families all over Western Australia and the potential, if it were made public, for it to start to confound the process that has been worked up over many, many years to determine and prioritise resources for people with disability and their families. So, I would need a guarantee of confidentiality before I would be prepared to put that forward.

The CHAIR: Okay. All right. Now, I draw your attention to sections 81(a) and (b) of the FMA. I am happy to read them if you need them.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, I have only got 82 and 83 here.

The CHAIR: So 81 is —

The Minister and the accountable authority of an agency are to ensure that —

- (a) no action is taken or omitted to be taken; and
- (b) no contractual or other arrangement is entered into,

by or on behalf of the Minister or agency that would prevent or inhibit the provision by the Minister to Parliament of information concerning any conduct or operation of the agency.

My question is: how do you reconcile the inherent tension between your executive duty to take actions or enter into contracts and arrangements with your ministerial duty to provide the Parliament with information if requested, and has this reconciliation been a difficult exercise for you; and, if so, can you provide an example? Has that ever arisen, that conflict—tension?

Hon HELEN MORTON: You just need to go back a little bit because I have not actually got the gist of section 81 without having it written in front of me. What is it about?

The Principal Research Officer: I will give you a copy if you like.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Thanks. Look, it is actually not something that has ever been brought to my attention in any particular way. So that —

- (a) no action is taken or omitted to be taken; and
- (b) no contractual or other arrangement is entered into,

by or on behalf of the Minister or agency that would prevent or inhibit the provision by the Minister to Parliament of information concerning any conduct or operation of the agency.

I do not believe that that ever happens in my department, but, I mean, if people want to bring a particular example to my attention, I would be happy to think otherwise, but I do not have any view of that.

The CHAIR: Look, there is one example that we are aware of where written into the contract was that no-one could even talk about the contract existing.

Hon HELEN MORTON: In my agency?

The CHAIR: No, no. One of the problems is if there are any other agencies that have written similar contracts like that, one of the issues that we would have is that we would not know that the contract exists to ask the question. It is still a question in my mind as to how an agency wrote a contract with that provision in it in light of that clause, but, I guess, it is also whether or not you feel that—I guess you have answered the question that you are not aware of any and more than happy if you want to, on review of that or when you talk to your agencies —

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am very strongly of the view of that.

The CHAIR: If there is any issues, that is fine. As a new minister, were you offered any education, training or mentoring on how to reconcile these competing interests and how to deal with all the issues we have talked about today in terms of providing information or not providing it to Parliament?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do not recall there being any specific training in that. In fact, I am trying to remember what training one does get when one starts as a minister. I certainly do not recall —

The CHAIR: “Good luck” is normally the —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Here are the keys to your office.

Hon HELEN MORTON: But I would say that the issue for me is that I have been a very longstanding member of the public sector, a very longstanding bureaucrat, operating at a very senior level, and so coming into this role actually was not that much different from how I have operated

for many years—like, the last 20 or 30 years—as a public servant. So, it probably did not feel very different for me, if you know what I mean, about accountability and public accountability, taxpayers' dollars et cetera. But in terms of the actual training, I do not recall there being any specific training that I had on how to be a minister.

The CHAIR: All right. That is fine.

Hon HELEN MORTON: But I might have forgotten. It is so long ago, I might have forgotten.

The CHAIR: It was clearly memorable training.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, it was. Obviously, we did have certain times when we were made knowledgeable about aspects of our pecuniary interests and disclosure of personal matters and things of that nature, with conflicts of interest we personally might have had, how to operate in cabinet with those conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest—all of that was covered. But I am trying to remember if there was training on how to be a minister and in the context of today's hearings, I do not recall there being anything.

The CHAIR: Okay. No worries. Are there any other questions?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I was just wondering if you were aware that in the United Kingdom that all contracts entered into by a government agency are made public when those contracts are over the value of £10 000. Are you aware of that common practice by the UK government?

Hon HELEN MORTON: No. I do not see why it should not be.

The CHAIR: Are there any other questions? If not, thank you very much for your time here today. The committee will email the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, to you in the next couple of days. The corrected transcript will be requested to be returned within five working days of receipt. The answers to the questions taken on notice will be requested to be returned by Thursday, 31 March 2016. I think there is only a couple of small ones. Should you be able unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible and the advice to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met.

Again, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Thank you very much.

Hearing concluded at 3.30 pm
