Section 2 Parliamentary Questions on Defence Matters

2.19 Questions on defence matters are addressed by Members of Parliament to the Minister of Defence, and are lodged initially by Members in the Office of the Clerk of the House. Depending on the subject-matter of the question, the Minister’s office may refer a copy of the question either to the MoD or to HQ NZDF or the preparation of a draft reply. In the NZDF, preparation of draft replies to questions is Coordinated by DD Coord (Min), Directorate of Coordination, Office of Chief of Defence Force (OCDF), HQ NZDF.

Types of Question

2.20 Questions may be, in order of urgency, urgent questions, questions for oral answer, or questions for written answer:

a. Urgent Questions. Urgent questions are questions lodged after 10.30 a.m. on any sitting day. Such questions may be asked, after questions for oral answer have been taken, if the Speaker considers they should be answered immediately. To the extent that time permits, any draft reply prepared by HQ NZDF should be accompanied by supplementary information, as for questions for oral answer.

b. Questions for Oral Answer. The Minister replies orally to the question during question time in the House later on the same day as the question has been lodged in the Clerk’s Office. Draft replies to these questions must be accompanied by supplementary information, so that the Minister has background information available in the event of being asked any supplementary questions on the same subject.

c. Questions for Written Answer. Questions addressed to Ministers for written answer, are published daily in the Parliamentary Website (www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz) and in the Parliamentary Bulletin which is published in hard copy at the end of each sitting week. The replies to questions for written answer are published in the Publications section of the Parliamentary Website.

Deadlines for Reply

2.21 The date and time when the draft reply to a parliamentary question should be received by DD Coord (Min) are clearly indicated in the covering e-mail referring the question for action by Service staffs or branches in Headquarters. The usual time limits for the receipt of replies in the Minister’s office are as follows:

a. Urgent Questions. The deadline for urgent questions will be set on a case-by-case basis by DD Coord (Min), in consultation with the Minister’s Private Secretary, to take account of, for example, the Minister’s requirements for consultation with colleagues.

b. Questions for Oral Answer. The draft reply is due in the Minister’s office by 1200 on the same day as the question is lodged in the Clerk’s office.

c. Questions for Written Answer. The draft reply is usually due in the Minister’s office on the second working day before the question is due in the Office of the Clerk of the House. In order to meet the Minister’s dead-line DD Coord (Min) will normally require a response to a question by 1600 on the fourth working day before the response is due in the Office of the Clerk of the House.
Receipt of Questions in HQ NZDF

2.22 Advance copies of all three types of question are sent from the Minister's office to Director of Coordination HQ NZDF by e-mail.

Action taken by DD Coord (Min)

2.23 On receipt of a parliamentary question from the Minister's office, DD Coord (Min) takes the following action:
   a. Creates an electronic copy of the question.
   b. Determines which Service or branch within HQ NZDF or HQ JFNZ should be responsible for preparing a reply to the question. The question may be referred to one or more of the staff listed in paragraph 2.5 d.
   c. E-mails an electronic copy of the question to the designated officer within the Service or branch determined to be responsible for drafting the response.
   d. When the question includes matters within the responsibility of both the NZDF and the MoD, DD Coord (Min) will email a copy of the question to PA to Sec Def (C). Coordination of the inputs from the two organisations, including timing of inputs and which organisation will lead needs to be agreed to ensure that the response reaches the Minister's office within the mandated time frame.
   e. Records details of the question in the register of parliamentary questions maintained by DD Coord (Min). The entry in the register for each question comprises the following data:
      (1) the number allocated to the question by the Clerk's Office in Parliament,
      (2) the year,
      (3) the name of the questioner,
      (4) the date received,
      (5) the date when the question is due for answer by the Minister,
      (6) the officer to whom the question has been referred for action, and
      (7) the subject of the question.

Action by Services and Branches of HQ NZDF

2.24 A draft reply that addresses the question asked is prepared by the Service or branch to which the question has been referred. The following points need to be borne in mind by officers who are asked to prepare replies to questions:
   a. Replies should be concise, accurate and to the point. In accordance with Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, the reply to any question 'must be concise and confined to the subject-matter of the question asked, and not contain:
      (1) statements of facts and the names of any persons unless they are strictly necessary to answer the question; or
      (2) arguments, inferences, imputations, epithets or ironical expressions; or
      (3) discreditable references to the House or any Member of Parliament or any offensive or unparliamentary expression; and
      (4) replies shall not refer to proceedings in committee at meetings closed to the public that have not yet been reported to the House, or (subject to Standing Order 112) to a case pending adjudication by a court.'
b. Specimens of the formats for replies to questions for written answer, questions for oral answer, and urgent questions are shown in Annex C, Annex D and Annex E respectively.

c. Replies to questions for oral answer and urgent questions are to be accompanied by supplementary information as indicated in paragraph 2.20 a. and b. Supplementary information should usually be not more than one page, and should be typed on a separate page.

d. Draft replies and supplementary information should be formatted in double spacing.

e. Replies should be accompanied by a referral note signed by the branch head or, in the case of the Services, by an officer authorised to approve ministerial draft replies.

f. Services and branches of HQ NZDF must ensure that their replies reach DD Coord (Min) within the deadline stated in the covering minute accompanying the copy of the question referred for draft reply.

**Subsequent Action by DD Coord (Min)**

2.25 DD Coord (Min) takes the following action on receipt of draft replies from Services and branches:

a. Coordinates the input(s) from Services and branches, taking into account information already in DD Coord (Min)’s database, amending the draft reply and any supplementary information, if necessary, to clarify points which are obscure or have been overlooked, to remove or, when necessary, explain any inconsistencies with previous ministerial comment, and to ensure that the reply conforms with the standards required for ministerial statements;

b. arranges for the reply and any supplementary information for the Minister to be typed in final;

c. prepares the reply for despatch to the Minister, with the papers arranged in the following sequence:

   (1) pink file copy of the reply with stamp to indicate referral for despatch;
   (2) working papers, stapled to the pink file copy;
   (3) any supplementary information (stapled to the pink file copy of the reply);
   (4) plain copy for the section’s guard file; and
   (5) plain copy for the Service or Branch which prepared the draft reply.

d. passes the folder containing the reply and associated papers to D Coord for clearance on behalf of CDF;

e. e-mails the electronic copy of the approved response direct to the Minister’s Private Secretary; and

f. sends the pink copy of the reply, together with any supplementary information and working papers to Records Management Services for filing in NZDF 1550/7.
Action after Despatch

2.26 DD Coord (Min) takes the following action after the despatch of the reply:
   a. notes the date of despatch in the ACCESS register of parliamentary questions maintained by DD Coord (Min);
   b. listens to the Minister’s replies to oral questions and urgent questions, and any supplementary questions, using the radio held by DD Coord (Min); and
   c. monitors replies to written questions published in the Parliamentary Website, drawing to the attention of D Coord any changes which may have been made in the Minister’s office.

Accessing Defence Related Parliamentary Questions

2.27 On-line access to Defence related Parliamentary Questions for the period 1998 to 2 March 2001 is available through DlXS as follows:
   a. Internet Explorer icon;
   b. ILP - NZDF Intranet Launch Pad;
   c. HQ NZDF; and select
   d. Parliamentary Questions.

2.28 For Parliamentary Questions since 2 March 2001 and up to the end of 2002 double-click on ‘Hansard Online’ and the ‘Search Hansard’ facility. Note that there is a time lag between the question being answered and the response being posted onto the site.

2.29 Current Parliamentary Questions can be accessed via the Parliamentary Website.

Annexes

A. Ministerial Slip Attached to Correspondence by Minister’s Private Secretary
B. Request for Draft Reply to Ministerial Correspondence
C. Format for Reply to Question for Written Answer
D. Format for Reply to Question for Oral Answer
E. Format for Reply to Urgent Question