

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2014**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Access to parliamentarians emails**

Question: **311**

Written: **Senator Faulkner**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 July 2014

1. Has any Senator or Member of the House of Representatives had their emails accessed or monitored?
 - a. If so, when and by whom?

Answer

1. Like other government agencies, DPS has automated system tools in place that inspect messages prior to them being delivered to PCN users. These tools inspect the each message to determine if it contains malware, spam or some other form of malicious content. The inspection looks for known 'signatures' or 'patterns' in the metadata and content. If malware is detected, depending on its nature, the message may be automatically rejected, quarantined or passed with a warning that it may be spam. The 'patterns' and 'signatures' are generated by international security laboratories.

Two scenarios exist where access may be required.

The first is to address ICT problems. In the limited circumstances where DPS ICT may require access to a Senators or Members email to resolve a problem, the ICT support officer will seek the permission of the Senator or Member prior to access. The ICT support officer will generally adjust permissions, configurations and settings but not normally require access to data or emails.

In the rare circumstance where the ICT support officer does require access to an email to resolve a problem this will be advised and access requested from the Senator or Member by the ICT support officer at the time.

The second scenario is for Search Warrants. Approval for provision of Senators and Members documents in response to a search warrant is covered by the 'AFP National Guideline for Execution of Search Warrants where Parliamentary Privilege may be involved'. Under the guideline these should be notified by the AFP to the Presiding Officer before execution. In the Presiding Officers absence notification is to the Clerk or Deputy Clerk, not to DPS.