



Administrative Appeals Tribunal

6 May 2021

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Clarification to Hansard

I write to you concerning evidence provided to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee at the hearing conducted on 29 March 2021 in relation to the inquiry into Centrelink's compliance program.

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) has identified the following evidence that requires clarification.

Evidence of Ms Sian Leathem, Registrar, Administrative Appeals Tribunal

On page 6 of the transcript, in responding to a question from Senator O'Neill about Karen Synon's appointment as a member of the AAT, the following exchange occurred between Senator O'Neill and Ms Leathem:

Senator O'NEILL: If I can be clear, Mr Barry has a very long history of association with the Liberal Party and he'd been put into this position. You haven't been able to answer my question about whether you're confident that all the decisions that Mr Barry made do not involve a conflict of interest. You can't confirm that's the case, but you've indicated that something is happening or the responsibility for determining that rests with a person called Karen Synon. Is she also a Liberal Party appointment? Is she involved with the Liberal Party in any significant way, to the best of your knowledge?

Ms Leathem: Governments make the appointments, Senator. I can't comment on her background, but she's been a member of the AAT for almost 20 years, I understand.

The AAT wishes to clarify that Karen Synon was a member of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) from 1 October 2001 and the Migration Review Tribunal (MRT) from 1 July 2004. She became a member of the AAT when the MRT and RRT were amalgamated with the AAT on 1 July 2015.

Yours sincerely

Sian Leathem
Registrar