



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE SUE LINES

**President Opening Statement – Finance and Public Administration Committee – Additional
Estimates 9th February 2026**

It has now been more than 12 months since the Presiding Officers terminated the former Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) Secretary due to a loss of trust and confidence and appointed Ms Jaala Hinchcliffe as Acting Secretary. Recruitment for a new Secretary commenced in January 2025 and after a competitive recruitment process, Ms Hinchcliffe was appointed Secretary of DPS on 7 March 2025.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives and I, as Presiding Officers of the Parliament, hold joint responsibility for the control and management of the parliamentary precincts. I am providing this statement to the Finance and Public Administration Committee (the Committee) as part of my responsibility, as a Presiding Officer and President of the Senate, to appear before estimates.

The Incentive to Retire (ITR) payment paid, by DPS, to a former Deputy Secretary has generated interest from members of this Committee, the media and the Australian public. Concerns about the ITR payment have been raised in previous hearings of the Committee, and the department has responded with detail on the matters it is able to discuss noting the acknowledged related investigation being conducted by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

On 24 July 2024, I was informed by Ms Hinchcliffe, in her then role as DPS Deputy Secretary, that matters in relation to the ITR payment made to the former deputy secretary required independent examination. This resulted in the appointment of an independent external investigator, Dr Fiona Roughley SC, to conduct a fact-finding investigation into the department's actions regarding the ITR payment.

The terms of reference supporting the independent investigation were provided to me when Dr Roughley was appointed. They have also been tabled with this Committee. A summary of the findings of Dr Roughley's report was provided to this Committee by the department on 16 October 2025. I do not intend to revisit these matters.

This committee was informed on November 4, 2024, that the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) had issued warrants at Australian Parliament House on 3 October 2024. I also do not intend to revisit this.

On 14 March 2025, prior to receiving a copy of Dr Roughley's final report, the Presiding Officers were informed by the DPS Deputy Secretary of concerns identified by Dr Roughley, including concerns about how data was collected by DPS ISD. The Deputy Secretary indicated that as a result of these and other concerns, consideration was being given, by the department, to commencing Code of Conduct investigations into DPS officers. The Presiding Officers were also informed that further code actions were likely. Code of Conduct matters fall within the operational responsibilities of the department.

The Roughley Report was provided to the Presiding Officers on 18 March 2025.

On 27 August 2025, the Presiding Officers were informed that an inappropriate search across all exchange locations of the parliamentary network had been undertaken by DPS ISD officers, contrary to authorisations provided by the DPS Secretary. The Presiding Officers were also informed that Dr Roughley, and the NACC, had raised concerns about the integrity of data provided previously by DPS ISD officers.

I was further informed that several Code of Conduct processes were close to completion and that in accordance with procedural fairness, the outcome of those matters would not be known until due process had been followed and procedural fairness afforded to the officers concerned.

I did not know at that time that DPS employee data, obtained from the Parliamentary Communication Network, was being held offsite.

On 29 October 2025, I was advised that the DPS employee data was held offsite in a secure data forensic laboratory. This was one business day before the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing of this Committee on 31 October.

On 3 November 2025, my office inquired about the feasibility of returning the data to Australian Parliament House (APH). The next day, the Presiding Officers issued a formal direction to the DPS Secretary to work with the Clerks in the creation of a procedure to facilitate the return of the data. This procedure was approved and signed off by the Presiding Officers. On 27 November 2025, the DPS employee data was returned to APH.

On January 7 and 8 January 2026, the Presiding Officers were informed by the DPS Secretary that all steps outlined in the data return procedure had been completed.

I advise the committee that I continue to have trust and confidence in the DPS Secretary and Deputy Secretary.

I thank all DPS staff for their work and their commitment to the smooth, efficient and professional way in which they carry out their responsibilities to this place. The Parliament is an iconic building and the heart of our democracy, what you do matters. I see your work and I appreciate it.

I also acknowledge the Parliamentary Services Commissioner, Dr Gordon de Brouwer, who has indicated he is stepping down from his role to explore new horizons.

I thank Gordon for the support and wise counsel he has provided to me in support of the various acts which govern the parliamentary departments. Thank you, Gordon for your service to the Parliament, the Australian Public and the Parliamentary Service.