



Opening statement – Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services

Good morning Chair and Members of the Finance and Public Administration Committee

I welcome the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss matters relevant to the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). Before I, and the Senior Executive members of DPS respond to your questions, I would like to take the opportunity to respond to media reporting relevant to the department regarding data search activities.

There are factual inaccuracies in reporting published yesterday about data searches undertaken by DPS, responded to by DPS or requested of DPS. It is disappointing that this has occurred.

For the absolute confirmation and certainty of the Committee:

- Media reporting has centered on whether Parliamentary data has been incorrectly accessed and used.
- I can categorically confirm that no Parliamentary or Parliamentary data has been provided to Dr Fiona Roughley SC or the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) in support of any investigation that has been, or is being undertaken about an Incentive to Retire (ITR) payment made to a former Deputy Secretary of the Department.
- Despite what has been reported in the media, I have not been *"investigating the propriety"* of the payment made to the then Deputy Secretary of the Department.
- I have been clear to the Committee that Dr Fiona Roughley SC was engaged by DPS to establish findings of fact in relation to the ITR payment made to the former DPS Deputy Secretary on 1 October 2023.
- I have also been clear to the Committee and in public reporting that there is an investigation into a related issue being undertaken by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).
- I have committed to keeping the Committee informed about the findings and recommendations contained in Dr Roughley's report, within the bounds of the related NACC investigation. There will be matters that I cannot respond to due to the ongoing NACC investigation. Any questions about the NACC investigation should be referred to the NACC.
- My commitment to the Committee has been met. On 16 October 2025, I provided the Committee with a summary of Dr Roughley's report, and the subsequent actions DPS has taken in response.
- Media reporting has referred to concerns held about the cybersecurity status of one of the department's legal providers, HWLE Lawyers. HWLE Lawyers has provided outstanding support to DPS during Dr Roughley's investigation and in the department's engagement with other agencies. I can confirm that HWLE Lawyers provided suitable cybersecurity and other assurances to facilitate the provision of information, with mechanisms and protocols established to manage data and any related sensitivities. These assurances remain.
- In terms of data required to support Dr Roughley's investigation, there was, rightfully, an expectation that her investigation would be conducted with integrity. Not meeting this expectation would not align with Parliamentary Service Values, the expectations of this Committee and those of the general public. Failure to ensure the investigation's integrity would have posed a substantive reputational risk to the department.
- To facilitate a thorough investigation, which was to examine the role of DPS in the ITR payment and calculation process, Dr Roughley required access to DPS information and data about departmental employees.

- Internal data searches were initially conducted by staff of the DPS ICT Division. These data searches were undertaken across the APH network and not limited to DPS staff.
- DPS confirms again that no Parliamentary or Parliamentary data was provided to HWLE Lawyers and Dr Roughley from the internally conducted DPS search.
- However, there were concerns that relevant data from the internally conducted searches had been filtered out, excluded or not provided. Dr. Roughley, HWLE Lawyers, the NACC, and DPS senior officers expressed significant concerns that the internal handling of the data request did not successfully identify expected and relevant material. Any risk that this had happened was unacceptable and would have affected Dr Roughley's ability to carry out her investigation robustly and with integrity.
- It is not acceptable that the internal data search, across the APH network, was conducted in this manner. The internal handling, by DPS staff, of the initial data retrieval process has been subject to investigation.
- In light of concerns about the internal data search conducted by DPS, a third-party IT forensic specialist, 'TransPerfect' was engaged by HWLE Lawyers, on instructions from, and with the agreement of DPS, to support the data retrieval process for material relevant to DPS employees and to support Dr Roughley's fact-finding investigation.
- Again, Dr Roughley's investigation was in relation to DPS actions and the involvement of DPS staff. There was, and there remains, no focus on Parliamentarians. DPS has seen no evidence, and Dr Roughley's full report contains no reference to, any engagement of any Parliamentarian in the ITR calculation and payment process.
- TransPerfect undertook a data collection process on DPS senior staff mailboxes. This process was limited to DPS employees and, unlike the initial search conducted by DPS ICT, did not occur across the APH network.
- In the data collection process undertaken by TransPerfect, a bulk extract occurred on DPS senior staff mailboxes. This means that all information held in the mailbox or Microsoft environment for that DPS staff member against a specified date range was provided to HWLE Lawyers. It was subsequently forensically searched to identify DPS staff material and staff engagement of relevance to the ITR calculation and payment. The remaining data was not reviewed for the Roughley Report but has been retained. This may include information about DPS functions performed on behalf of Parliamentarians. This information has been quarantined and has not been provided to Dr Roughley or the NACC.
- Finally, the inference in the media reporting that any investigation was undertaken in order to step into the role of Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services is both incorrect and deeply offensive.

I appreciate that the Committee may have further questions in relation to this matter, which the department will answer within the bounds of the related NACC investigation.

Finally, before taking questions from the Committee, I would like to acknowledge the staff of DPS, who every day, in often challenging circumstances, serve the Parliament, Parliamentarians and Australian Parliament House to the best of their abilities. I am grateful for their commitment and their support.

I, and the Senior Executives of the Department of Parliamentary Services, are available to answer questions.

Jaala Hinchcliffe
Secretary

31 October 2025