Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committee of Privileges

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Dear Committee Secretary

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee of Privileges' Inquiry into the Department of Parliamentary Services' handling of documents and communications.

I have worked for the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) for a few years. During this time, I have accumulated quite a bit of valuable institutional knowledge about what was and was not done optimally for the purposes of serving Parliamentary business and proceedings, and how things have changed to improve operations.

Record Keeping

Emails that cannot be accessed, contrary to recordkeeping obligations

Recordkeeping obligations not only require making and storing certain records but also ensuring that actual *access* to those records is possible; otherwise, in practice, those obligations are not met.

The contents of emails I have accumulated have institutional learning value and are also important for accountability reasons. Significantly, those emails also contain information relevant to Parliamentary business and proceedings.

In the past, some of us have been encouraged to create folders to store our emails, rather than having them all in one Inbox; this makes perfect sense. Furthermore, some of us were also encouraged by certain people in ICT to create passwords for those folders. However, where a folder password is lost/forgotten, ICT has no way of 'hacking into' those folders, so that the emails and valuable information can become available when a relevant Parliamentary inquiry takes place, and the pertinent information stored in those folders is requested.

This failure to access password-protected folders may have potentially significant consequences, as an inability to access those documents may affect or interfere with the operation of parliamentary privilege/proceedings in Parliament.

In the past, certain staff in ICT responded that not even Microsoft has a solution to this issue. After some research, I have discovered that clever overseas hackers seem to have the skills to hack into those password-protected folders in Outlook.

AI has also provided the following information:

> Accessing password-protected Outlook data files (.pst) without the password requires specialised third-party PST password recovery software to remove or reset the encryption. While Microsoft cannot retrieve lost PST passwords, tools like Outlook Password Recovery or Softaken can decrypt them, allowing you to open the files in Outlook.

It is unclear as to why the ICT area has not thought to develop its own access software, or engaged a carefully chosen third party to create software for this purpose.

ICT has not sought to address this Outlook password-protected folder access problem, or, alternatively, to turn off the password option so people do not find themselves unable to access required emails for the purposes of 'proceedings in Parliament'.

Lack of consistency in moving emails across in Windows upgrades & in having backups

Also, in the past, my experience has been that ICT has not been consistent in transferring all emails from dedicated Outlook subfolders, and/or they have failed to be consistent in keeping backups of emails. Hence, when those folders were transferred across in a Windows upgrade but without stored emails in them (i.e., empty), those emails could not even be retrieved via backups. And certainly, where some Outlook subfolders failed to be transferred across at all in an upgrade, information was often completely lost.

The other issue has been certain ICT staff suggesting that I should just consider deleting a whole tranche of emails— because they were old— for the purposes of having more space, despite relevant ICT staff not being aware of the value of emails in certain folders, or even more basically, not being conscious of the impact on recordkeeping obligations, which may adversely affect 'proceedings in Parliament'.

ICT also do not seem to be given sufficient time on certain jobs to properly document the client's specific troubleshooting issue.