

Ms Lyn Beverley

Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Beverley

With my background as Secretary of Joint House Department from 1986-2004 I provided a submission to the Committee reviewing aspects of the administration of the Department of Parliamentary Services in August 2011.

I was not aware that the Committee in June this year received a further reference to review the outcome to the recommendations it made in its report arising out of that inquiry.

While I am out of time in meeting the required date for submissions to the new inquiry it has allowed me the luxury of reading the latest submission provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services.

My particular interest is in the area of 'heritage management, building maintenance and asset management issues' which was the focus of my original submission.

I express some concern with the response from DPS to the Committee in relation to these matters.

The DPS advises that the 'Central Reference Document (CRD) is not suitable as a management document because of its structure and narrative style. It has therefore engaged an 'Expert Advisory Panel' to assist in preparing a 'Design Principles Document' and a 'Conservation Management Plan'.

I still support the completion of the CRD so that the full extent of the spirit and integrity of the architectural process which developed Parliament House is not lost – I note that already certain documents pertaining to the construction of the new Parliament House that were referred to the Commonwealth Archives cannot be located. It is an important historical document.

I also believe the design integrity of the building cannot be maintained if it is governed by 'tick and flick' management documents utilised by inadequately skilled staff. It is my contention that post JHD, the DPS was deskilled because it did not retain staff with the right professional qualifications and did not follow through on the long term asset management plan put in place with the then

Department of Finance. I note that this has required extra funding being provided to DPS in 2014-15 to once again develop an asset management place for Parliament House.

I do not know what DPS is doing or has done with regard to engaging staff with the requisite professional skills to manage design integrity and/or long term asset management into the future. However, one thing does concern me and that is that the DPS submission advises that the group developing the 'Design Principles' document and the 'Conservation Management Plan' is an advisory panel. This suggests DPS retains sole authority as to the outcomes.

The current administration may be working hard to steer the ship back on to the right course but who is to say it will not go off course in the future.

On reflection I would suggest the Parliament and the Australian people would be best served if the Presiding Officers had available to them an architect of stature with a building conservation background who would be responsible for reporting to the Presiding Officers in an independent capacity and through them to the Parliament on the matters raised in Recommendation 13 of the Committee's earlier report.

Yours sincerely

Michael Bolton

19/11/2014