

Question: 8
Topic: Car park incidents
Written: 22 February 2016

Senator Bernardi asked:

DPS's 3 Dec 2015 answer to Question on Notice 23 (from the October 2015 Supplementary Estimates) stated that since January 2015 there were four instances of tailgating in car parks, including three in the Senate private car park and one in the House of Representatives private car park.

1. Please provide the dates that each of the incidents occurred, particularly for those in the Senate car park.
2. Please provide a description of each incident.
3. On what date was the Usher of the Black Rod's office informed of each incident?

Answer:

The Usher of the Black Rod sought information from DPS about these incidents in order to provide an answer to the Committee. DPS has advised that it will be providing information in relation to these incidents in response to the same questions asked of DPS by Senator Bernardi. Once the dates and details of the incidents are clarified further advice can be provided about if and when the Usher of the Black Rod was informed of the incidents.

4. What is the usual process undertaken for informing the Usher of the Black Rod about security incidents relating to the Senate, and to Parliament House as a whole?
5. Which staff are involved in this process? (e.g. the Deputy Usher may be the first point of contact by PSS officers, before the Deputy informs the Usher of the Black Rod)
6. Does the usual process involve notifications in writing (via email, letter) about the incidents to the Usher of the Black Rod? If not, why not?

Answer:

The process by which the Usher of the Black Rod is informed about security incidents relating to the Senate and to Parliament House as a whole varies depending on the nature, seriousness and timing of the incident and the connection with the role of Black Rod.

Broadly, as a member of the Security Management Board, the Usher of the Black Rod has a watching brief in relation to security matters and in this respect needs to maintain a level of awareness about security matters to enable her to undertake her duties as a board member. More specifically, the Usher of the Black Rod is the Agency Security Executive for the Department of the Senate and also provides advice and support to the President in relation to security matters, including being the conduit of information about security incidents from the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

A range of security incidents occur within the parliamentary precincts, some of which are of such a minor nature that they are not reported beyond those responsible for operational security: the AFP and the Parliamentary Security Service (PSS). Other more serious incidents,

particularly those that relate to the Senate chamber, committees or senators are advised to the Usher of the Black Rod.

Information about security incidents is conveyed to the Usher of the Black Rod primarily by the AFP Parliament House Security Controller, or in some instances by a representative of the DPS Security Branch. Depending on the nature of the incident and/or the availability of the Usher of the Black Rod, an incident may be reported in the first instance to the Deputy Black Rod, who will then in due course inform the Usher of the Black Rod as appropriate.

Methods of communication include phone call, text message or email, with a phone call being the method used for serious incidents that require immediate attention, advice or communication to the President. Security incident reports are also created by the AFP and the PSS for significant incidents and circulated.

Security incidents are also discussed at the regular security briefings held by the Joint Management Group which the Deputy Black Rod attends. This forum may be the method of advising of minor security incidents, and also to discuss more serious incidents and lessons learnt.

The same answer to Question on Notice 23 states that “In the same timeframe, we also recorded two incidents in the Senate car park where AFP responded to concerns about vehicles.”

7. Please provide the dates on which the Usher of the Black Rod’s office was informed of each of these incidents.

Answer:

10 June 2015: Incident involving an unattended bag left next to a motor bike. The Usher of the Black Rod was informed the same day as the incident occurred.

12 November 2015: Incident involving a car that was left with the engine still running. The Usher of the Black Rod was informed the same day as the incident occurred.

In the Black Rod’s letter to the committee (dated 8 February 2016), she states that the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod was informed on 4 December 2015 about two tailgating incidents that occurred in the week of 18 November 2015.

8. Why was there a delay in informing the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod about these two incidents?

The Usher of the Black Rod’s letter also states that she does “not recall this being brought to my attention at the time.”

9. Would it be the usual process for the Usher of the Black Rod to have been informed about tailgating incidents like this?
10. Why was the Usher of the Black Rod not informed of these two incidents?

Answer:

This matter involved one pass holder riding a scooter who twice entered the Senate Car Park immediately after another vehicle without swiping. The Deputy Usher of the Black Rod was informed of the matter on 4 December 2016 at the Joint Management Group security briefing.

As this incident involved a pass holder who was authorised to park in the Senate Car Park, rather than a non-pass holder, it is of a less serious nature than had it involved a non-pass holder and therefore did not require immediate notification to the Usher of the Black Rod. The regular meetings of the Joint Management Group is an appropriate forum to advise of such an incident.

It is the general practice of the Deputy Black Rod to keep the Usher of the Black Rod apprised of security matters that are brought to his attention, to the extent practicable and necessary. While the Usher of the Black Rod cannot recall this being brought to her attention it is possible that a brief reference to it was made by the Deputy in the days that followed.