Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2015-16

Question on Notice – No. 5

Senator Ludwig: asked the President of the Senate on 25 May 2015 the following:

Hansard, 25 May 2015, p. 60.

The President: I would not regard it as a delay but I can explain the circumstances. On the evening or late afternoon of Tuesday, 21 April an email was sent to Ms Mills effectively terminating her position. That was followed up with a hard copy letter, I believe. Out of respect and due courtesy, one would allow someone who has received that notice to at least inform family and friends and a day or so was given for that. I understand there was communication from Ms Mills post that event to DPS. Then when we were satisfied that Ms Mills had notified whom she needed to notify and equally, and just as importantly, for the acting secretary on the Friday morning of the 24th to notify the DPS management group, then we decided to release our statement. That statement was meant to be a completely internal statement, not for public release.

Senator GALLAGHER: There was certainly no information from the presiding officers to members or senators in this place.

The President: I think that may have been followed up post that, but I will take that on notice.

Mr President, the Hon Stephen Parry answers:

While there is no legislative requirement for formal advice concerning the termination of the Secretary to be issued by the Presiding Officers, it is my practice to always keep my fellow senators informed.

I was intending to discreetly advise my fellow senators but media coverage of the former Secretary's termination overtook this. The news of the former Secretary's termination had reached everyone and there was no need for any further statement on such a sensitive matter that had already been placed in the public spotlight.

Notwithstanding this the Committee itself was formally notified given its oversight of DPS, along with the heads of the other parliamentary departments.