

Senate F&PA Committee
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Witness Name: Senator Parry
Organisation: Dept. of the Senate

President of the Senate

Opening Statement

Financial and Public Administration Legislation Committee

20th October 2014

Chairman and Senators,

I take this opportunity to make an opening statement to the Committee.

Firstly, could I acknowledge and thank the Clerk of the Senate, Dr Rosemary Laing, The Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Ms Carol Mills, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr Phil Bowen, for the professional service that they each continue to provide to the Parliament, and in doing so, acknowledge the efforts of all staff within those Departments. Since becoming President, I have gained a new perspective on the amount of work that occurs by our Parliamentary Departments, the majority of it without any recognition, understanding or comprehension on the part of many of us. I sincerely thank them all.

Mr Chairman, Parliament House Security and related matters has been topical since my election to the Presidency. I wish to confine my opening remarks to that aspect.

My key priority, with the Speaker, is the security, safety and well-being of all persons within the Parliamentary precinct. This is a responsibility that I do not take lightly.

It is sometimes worth a reminder that the Parliament, in particular the two Chambers, are not sporting arenas, or spheres where interjection, interruption, participation or disruption by visitors to the chamber galleries is tolerated. One of the freedoms that we continue to enjoy is that anyone can view, live, the proceedings of the Parliament. With this freedom comes the onus upon all visitors to respect the fact that the chamber proceedings and debates must not be interrupted. As presiding officers we must diligently ensure that each chamber can operate without interference.

On Thursday the 2nd of this month, I was advised that a group of people, some being male, were going to disrupt question time in the House of Representatives. The advice further indicated that this group would be wearing garments that would prevent recognition of their facial features and possibly their gender.

As a result of this advice coming to me via the Usher of the Black Rod and the Speakers' Office, the Speaker and I agreed to put in place temporary measures to ensure that such an event in the public gallery would not be disruptive, particularly where the identity of any person causing disruption would be difficult to determine. The Speaker and I always envisaged that this would be subject to further review.

The Speaker and I met yesterday and replaced the interim measures with further measures, of an interim nature as follows:

Further to the circular of 2 October 2014 providing for interim access arrangements to the private areas and public galleries at Parliament House, the Presiding Officers have met yesterday and enhanced those arrangements. This circular replaces the circular of 2 October with effect from 8.30am Monday 20 October 2014.

The new interim arrangements are as follows:

- (a) The renewal and issue of sponsored passes remains suspended.*
- (b) Photographic identification is required for the issue of escorted passes for all adult visitors.*
- (c) All visitors entering Parliament House will be required to temporarily remove any coverings that prevent the recognition of facial features. This will enable DPS security staff to identify any person who may have been banned from entering Parliament House or who may be known, or discovered, to be a security risk. Once this process has taken place, visitors are free to move about the public spaces of the building, including all chamber galleries, with facial coverings in place.*

Procedures are still in place to ensure that DPS security manage these procedures in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

These measures are designed to enhance and strengthen the existing access, identification and security arrangements at Parliament House. Further amendments and enhancements to pass policy and broader security practice will be implemented in due course.

As always, do not hesitate to report any security issues to the Parliamentary Security Operations Room on [6277 5999](tel:62775999).

The effect of these new interim measures are primarily to ensure enhanced measures at the point of entry to Parliament House. This will be by way of identifying each person as they enter by their facial features and thereby enabling persons with facial coverings to move from that point freely in the public portions of the building, including the chamber galleries. An inhibiting factor prior to today was that visitors could enter the building with facial coverings and never be identified, particularly if they were a person that had been banned, or a person who was a known security threat.

The reason why both sets of additional access arrangements are interim is because of the following:

- The Presiding Officers are constantly taking advice on access measures that are contingent upon other potential measures, such as the issuing and style of security passes and physical building changes.

- Should they wish, Senators and Members will be able to provide input and comment to the Presiding Officers.
- The potential for a change in threat levels at Parliament House.

Mr Chairman, I thank you and Senators for the opportunity to provide this statement and I am happy to take questions.