

## James Ashby, Mal Brough question editing of crucial Channel Nine interview about Peter Slipper diary affair

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Two central figures in the Peter Slipper diary affair have cast doubt on a key interview that aired on Channel Nine last year.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) are investigating whether Special Minister of State Mal Brough "procured" Mr Slipper's diaries from James Ashby, who at the time worked in Mr Slipper's office.

Part of the debate over Mr Brough's role relates to an interview that aired on Channel Nine last year.

At the time, journalist Liz Hayes asked Mr Brough: "Did you ask James Ashby to procure copies of Peter Slipper's diaries for you?"

"Yes I did," he replied.

Now Mr Brough and Mr Ashby are questioning how the interview was edited.

Today Mr Brough told Parliament, "what was put to air was not the full question".

His comment came in response to questioning by shadow attorney-general Mark Dreyfus, who accused Mr Brough of misleading Parliament by citing a court finding as his defence when it was delivered prior to the 60 Minutes episode.

Mr Dreyfus also questioned Justice Minister Michael Keenan on the search warrant executed at Mr Brough's house, which Mr Keenan confirmed he was informed of.

Mr Brough has continued to strongly defend his actions.

"I stand by all my actions as being honest and appropriate," he said.

Mr Ashby told Macquarie Radio this morning that Mr Brough "never, never, ever, ever" asked him for copies of the diaries of Mr Slipper.

Mr Ashby now maintains he went to Mr Brough with copies of the diaries.

The interview appears to contradict the interview Mr Brough gave last year to 60 Minutes.

Mr Ashby is now implying Channel Nine may have manipulated the answer.

"I don't know exactly how that 60 Minutes interview was cut, but obviously it didn't look good for Mal Brough," he said.

"But I can assure you that never at any point did Mal Brough ask me for copies of those diaries."

Mr Ashby also gave an interview to 60 Minutes last year, where he appeared to accept the proposition that Mr Brough asked for the diaries.

"I must admit I was more than willing to assist Mal with the information that he was seeking," he said in the 60 Minutes interview.



PHOTO: Mal Brough told Parliament today what was put to air in Channel Nine interview "was not the full question". (ABC News: Nick Haggarty)

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### Key points:

- James Ashby says Mal Brough never asked him for Slipper diary copies
- Brough, Ashby questioning how Channel Nine interview last year in which Brough said he did ask for copies was edited
- Ashby claims it was Wyatt Roy who advised him to make copies

## Claims over Wyatt Roy's involvement

Mr Ashby has also claimed today that Assistant Minister for Innovation Wyatt Roy advised him to copy Mr Slipper's diary.

Mr Ashby said it was Mr Roy, not Mr Brough, who told him to copy the document.

"Wyatt said he didn't really know how to advise me and said he wanted to speak with Christopher Pyne," Mr Ashby told The Australian newspaper.

"He then called me back and I went and saw him in his office and he presented me a sheet of paper with instructions of what I should do, and one of the first steps was to get a copy of the office diary.

"That is how I came to be printing off a copy of the digital diary — it was evidence in my case."

Mr Ashby confirmed the quotes on Macquarie Radio this morning and said the sheet of paper would have Mr Roy's fingerprints on it.

"And Wyatt's never denied giving me any assistance in the beginning," he said.

**Topics:** government-and-politics, parliament, federal-government, australia

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