

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

**Group: 2**

**Program: 1.9**

**Question No. BE15/015**

**Senator Bilyk asked the following question at the hearing on 27 and 28 May 2015:**

Senator BILYK: Did the extension of the royal commission interrupt Commissioner Heydon's sabbatical in Oxford at all?

Senator Brandis: I think the word 'sabbatical' is inapt. The position was that Mr Heydon was asked whether he was prepared to continue to serve when the government decided to extend the reporting date of the royal commission. Mr Heydon kindly agreed to continue to serve but he had pre-existing academic commitments as a visiting professor at the Oxford law school which he met and which the government was happy to accommodate his meeting.

Senator BILYK: Was Mr Heydon pleased at the extension of the royal commission, or did it get in the way of his plans?

Senator Brandis: Mr Heydon is a professional man of the highest eminence and he was asked to undertake a professional task. He agreed to do so and, no doubt, has gone about it with the dispassion one would expect from a professional man.

Senator BILYK: Is there any correspondence between the commissioner and the Attorney or his department touching upon the sabbatical in Oxford?

Senator Brandis: As I say, it is not a sabbatical. Mr Heydon—

Senator BILYK: His time in Oxford.

Senator Brandis: I do not recall signing any letters to him, if that is what you mean. But I will take that on notice and have it checked.

Senator BILYK: Thank you. Can we get a copy of that correspondence if there is any?

Senator Brandis: I will have to consider that; it may or may not be appropriate for release.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

There is no correspondence between the Attorney-General or the Attorney-General's Department and Commissioner Heydon on this matter.