

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2012

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Security incident**
Question: **149**
Written **Senator Ronaldson**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 November 2012

In reference to *Proof Hansard*, 15 October 2012, p. 36, Ms Carol Mills, Secretary of DPS, mentioned the “human error around the rostering” and “not having rostering on the key points”, which enabled the intruder to enter the private areas of Parliament. Ms Mills detailed this further at p. 27, stating that “a mistake was made the following morning not to verify that that committee hearing was indeed proceeding” which resulted in security staff “not [being] rostered on to those two areas”. Can the department advise:

- a. Who was normally meant to verify that the committee hearing was proceeding?
- b. How exactly did the communication breakdown occur that morning and who was involved?
- c. Have any communication breakdowns occurred in the past, irrespective of whether a security incident resulted for a lack of rostering? If so, why was action never taken previously to fix the system after previous rostering problems occurred?
- d. What were the normal processes at the time of the incident for undertaking these checks?
- e. Why weren't the normal processes followed on this occasion? Why weren't the ordinary checks undertaken?

Answer

- a) The Roster Office, a team within DPS Security, is responsible for rostering security personnel in the vicinity of a committee room when a public hearing is taking place. As part of the rostering process, Roster Office staff contact the relevant committee secretariat to verify that a scheduled public hearing is proceeding.
- b) A schedule of public hearings, along with other events at Parliament House, is discussed at a daily briefing of DPS Security team leaders. On 23 August 2012, a team leader queried why Security personnel were not rostered in the vicinity of committee room 1R3, where a public hearing was scheduled. The Roster Office manager incorrectly advised that the public hearing had been cancelled.
- c) A similar error occurred on 17 August 2012, which resulted in Security personnel not being rostered in the vicinity of a committee room where a public hearing was to occur. A team leader noticed this error in advance of the hearing; Security personnel were allocated, and no incident occurred. This was not reported to DPS Security management until after the second incident on 23 August 2012.
- d) The processes at the time of the incident were verification of public hearing details with the relevant committee secretariat, by phone on the day before the scheduled hearing.
- e) The normal processes were not followed due to human error. The checks also failed due to human error. Changes to Roster Office management and administration have since been made, including improved quality control procedures, review of roles, and allocation of a dedicated officer to communicate from committee secretariats.