



Senator Louise Pratt  
Chair  
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator,

I appeared before the Finance and Public Administration Committee (the Committee) Budget Estimates 2024–25 on 28 May 2024. I have become aware of information held by the Department of Parliamentary Services that goes to a question asked by Senator Hume that I was unable to answer at the table. The relevant passage of the Proof Hansard is as follows:

**Page 29**

*Senator HUME: Can I just clarify again. An incentive to retire sounds like something that is initiated from above as opposed to by the individual. By its very nature, you are providing an incentive for somebody to leave the service. This was not initiated by Ms Saunders, was it?*

*Ms Hinchcliffe: That's a question for Services Australia as to how the—*

*Senator HUME: She worked for you.*

*Ms Hinchcliffe: She did, but the conversations were held with Services Australia. I don't know who initiated the conversation, whether it was Services Australia or Ms Saunders. I have seen in my career that both of those things can happen. It can be initiated by the employee; it can be initiated by the employer.*

*Senator HUME: So two-thirds of the way through the secondment Ms Saunders received an incentive to retire. We don't know whether it was initiated by her or whether it was initiated by DPS or whether it was initiated by the CEO of Services Australia. Is that correct?*

*Ms Hinchcliffe: That is right, Senator. I'm not aware of those details.*

*Senator HUME: Is anybody at the desk aware of why Ms Saunders had an incentive to retire two-thirds of the way through a secondment?*

On 10 August 2023, the Chief Operating Officer of Services Australia provided an email to the First Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services, Department of Parliamentary Services that stated, in part:

- As you know, Ms Cate Saunders is currently on secondment from the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) to Services Australia for a period of 6 months, which ends in October 2023.

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- It is understood there is no role for Ms Saunders to return to in DPS.
- Ms Saunders indicated an interest in being considered for an incentive to retire from the APS, as part of a respectful separation.
- Given a conflict of interest exists, the Public Service Commissioner has advised that Mr Stefanic can delegate the decision in relation to the incentive to retire to the Services Australia CEO, Ms Rebecca Skinner.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this clarification to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Jaala Hinchcliffe  
Deputy Secretary

3 June 2024

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