



Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024-25, 4 November 2024
Department of Parliamentary Services
Opening Statement, Acting Secretary

Chair and members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee and provide an opening statement relating to ongoing matters at the Department of the Parliamentary Services. I will provide copy of this statement for tabling and for the reference of the Committee.

As the Committee would be aware, Mr Stefanic, Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Service is on leave. The Department does not comment on basis of individual leave arrangements.

As Mr Stefanic is on leave, this is my first appearance before the Committee as Acting Secretary, having been appointed by the Presiding Officers.

Ms Nicola Hinder PSM, who is also at the table with me today, started with DPS on 8 October 2024. Ms Hinder is Acting Deputy Secretary while I am Acting Secretary.

My DPS colleagues and I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions today.

The work of the department remains an absolute priority, and I am pleased with the dedication and efforts of DPS staff in progressing a number of important outcomes and facilitating key events, since our last appearance at the Committee.

There are two matters that I wish to address with the Committee prior to answering questions. On the first of these matters, I confirm that I have asked the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) whether the information I am providing in this opening statement will impact or impede their investigation. The NACC has advised that it will not.

As reported in the media last month, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) attended Parliament House on 3 October 2024 in relation to an ongoing investigation.

I can confirm that the NACC executed warrants on the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Any questions about this activity and any investigation that the NACC might be undertaking should be referred to the NACC as I am conscious that discussing the matters may

inadvertently identify persons of interest, prematurely damage reputations and /or compromise an individual's right to impartial adjudication.

Should further matters be raised about the NACC activity in the Hearing, I will refer to what I have included in this statement.

Secondly, in the May 2024 Estimates hearing, questions were asked about the secondment and Incentive to Retire payment made to a previous Department of Parliamentary Services Deputy Secretary. After the May 2024 hearing, I wrote two letters to the Committee Chair clarifying my testimony. Both of these letters are now part of the public record.

I would like to advise that after concerns were raised with me by a DPS employee about whether the department had followed correct processes in making the incentive to retire payment, I engaged Dr Fiona Roughly SC to conduct an independent fact-finding investigation into the department's role in the incentive to retire payment. As this remains a matter undergoing independent investigation by Dr Roughley SC, I am unable to provide further comment on this matter but will update the Committee at the appropriate time.

Finally Senators, as we are a month away from the end of the 2024, I would express my sincere appreciation to DPS staff for their dedication, hard work and support throughout the year. We can see their efforts every day when we walk around this magnificent building, and I would like to thank them for their care and diligence.

My colleagues and I are happy to take questions from the Committee.

Jaala Hinchliffe
Acting Secretary

04 November 2024