



THE SENATE
FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 August 2019

Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM
Secretary
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Email:
CC:

Dear Dr Parkinson,

Inquiry into compliance by former Ministers of State with the requirements of the Prime Minister's Statement of Ministerial Standards

I write regarding the above inquiry and the committee's invitation for you to appear at a public hearing.

On 19 August 2019, the committee received the following advice from Mr John Reid, First Assistant Secretary, Government Division, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, on behalf of your office, via email to Ms Ann Palmer, Committee Secretary:

Dr Parkinson advises that there is nothing further that he can add to his already-published letter on this subject. All evidence he could provide to the Committee is included in those pages. On that basis, he does not consider it would be worthwhile use of the Committee's time for him to appear.

The committee has determined it has questions it wishes to ask you in relation to the department's submission.

The committee further notes that the Statement of Ministerial Standards provides a direct, and personal, role for the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to the giving of advice to the Prime Minister in relation to the standards.

First, as you will be aware, the inquiry's terms of reference are as follows:

- a) compliance by former Ministers of State with the requirements of paragraph 2.25 of the Prime Minister's Statement of Ministerial Standards, dated 30 August 2018, including, but not limited to the undertakings given by Ministers to comply with their obligations concerning post-ministerial employment, and action taken by the Prime Minister and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to ensure full compliance by former Ministers with paragraph 2.25 of the Ministerial Standards; and*
- b) any related matters.*

The terms of reference specifically direct the committee to consider the actions taken by the Prime Minister and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

You are uniquely able to answer questions regarding these actions. The committee's understanding, based on answers given to it over many sessions of estimates, is that matters such as this are handled by you as Secretary of the Department.

Second, although Mr Reid has asserted on your behalf that you are unable to provide further information beyond that in your already published letter, you have in fact already provided further information in a number of media appearances.

You have provided your opinion about the drafting and purpose of the standards:

"So, I think the key issue there is outsiders are really making assessment against what they would like the set of standards to be, rather than against what the standards actually are and all I can do is make an assessment against the standards as they exist.

Those standards are pretty clear and they are reasonably, I think, reasonably well structured.

But it's almost a case that some of these people who are critical of former ministers are really implicitly saying ministers should never be allowed to hold a job again. No prime minister can ever work again because they cover so many issues. No treasurer could ever work again because they're involved in so many issues and I think it's just, it's a case where people have not thought through enough about what is actually required?

And the key issue is to ensure that people don't misuse information that they obtain purely because they happen to be Minister for X at particular point in time."

7:30 Report, 25 July 2019

You have provided opinions about the Prime Minister's approach to enforcement of the standards:

Asked whether he believed the Prime Minister's ambition was also to make ministers more accountable in future, Dr Parkinson said:

"Oh I think so. If you look at Prime Minister Morrison, I think he is attempting to run a cabinet government that is much more akin to that of Bob Hawke and John Howard, and if you recall they both had a very clear focus on what is the role of the minister."

'Scott Morrison has the public service and accountability in his sights, but what's behind the rhetoric?'

Laura Tingle, ABC Online, 27 July 2019

In any event, with respect, it is a matter for the committee to decide what evidence is relevant to its inquiry.

It is therefore the committee's expectation that you will make yourself available to appear at a public hearing.

As a matter of urgency, could you please advise of your availability to appear at a public hearing on any day prior to your retirement or on 5 September 2019.

Yours sincerely

Senator Jenny McAllister

Chair

Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee