

# Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Additional Estimates Hearing—February 2017

## Answers to Questions on Notice

### Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Inadvertent disclosure of mobile telephone numbers**

Question: **91**

Written **Senator Farrell**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 13 April 2017**

With reference to the inadvertent disclosure of mobile telephone numbers of many parliamentarians and their staff published in the Parliamentarians' Mobile and Telecommunications and Data Services Expenditure reports:

What action did the Department of Parliamentary Services take in response to being advised of the breach?

#### Answer

On being advised of the data spill, the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) carried out the following actions, many of these actions occurred in parallel.

- Immediately verified the accuracy of the alleged data spill and notification of key stakeholders.
- Removed the comprised reports from the APH website.
- Contacted the vendor responsible for generating the reports to verify that they were responsible for the error that caused the information to be made available. This was verified and the company indicated responsibility for the error.
- Issued a response to the journalist who raised the issue.
- Issued an information circular to all parliamentarians advising of the circumstances of the data spill.
- Identified those parliamentarian's offices that were directly impacted by the data spill and issued a notification confirming that the identity of users and numbers attached to their offices were potentially disclosed. This notification included information on how to change any affected numbers and contact information to seek additional information on the data spill.
- Identified any search engines that may have cached the information after it had been removed from the APH website. Google was found to be the only major search engine through which the information was still available.
- Contacted Google and had the cached copies of the disclosed data deleted.
- DPS followed up with impacted parliamentarian offices advising exact details of information disclosed in the data spill and provided detailed information advising how to block unwanted calls or SMS messages and also provided several options to manage any privacy issues related to the data spill. This included details on how to change phone numbers that may have been impacted.
- DPS contacted ASIO and were briefed on any potential security issues related to the data spill.
- Update briefings to key stakeholders on progress and relayed information provided by ASIO.
- DPS has sent an SMS message to any former parliamentarians and former staff who may have retained a disclosed number. This message will provide advice on how to manage potential privacy issues and also provide contact details to seek additional information.
- The Chief Information Officer (CIO) of DPS has contacted the Chief Government and Opposition Whips offices in both houses as well as the parties and independent parliamentarians to offer a private briefing on the incident and any resulting privacy and security issues.