

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee— Additional Budget Estimates February 2009

Parliament Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Answers to Questions on Notice

Topic: Behaviour of security staff.

Questions P19(a)-(c), Written questions on notice

P19(a-c) (RONALDSON)-DPS

- a) Has the Department received any complaints or expressions of concerns about the behaviour of security staff at night in MPs offices?
- b) Specifically, have you had any complaints about security staff taking photographs in Senators' offices?
- c) What action has the Department taken in relation to these matters?

Answers

1 There have been no reported incidents of security staff taking photos in Senators' offices.

2 The Department of Parliamentary Services (**DPS**) did receive an anonymous complaint alleging that security staff had taken pictures in Ministers' offices.

3 Details of the two incidents occurring in Ministers' offices are as follows.

(a) On 18 August 2008, an anonymous letter was sent to DPS, claiming breaches of security within Ministers' offices at Parliament House and raising concerns about the appointment process for Parliamentary Security Service (**PSS**) staff. The letter was also addressed to the Attorney-General, ASIO, PSCC, Special Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Defence, Presiding Officers and the Chair of the Senate Finance & Public Administration Committee

(b) The security incidents were referred to the DPS Agency Security Advisor who initiated an investigation. Neither of the two PSS members involved denied taking the photos, which they had done to support the issue of security breach notices. It was determined that both showed a lack of judgement and went beyond the approved procedures for issuing security breach notices. These procedures provide detailed instructions to be followed when issuing breach notices and do not include taking photographs.

(c) At the time of each incident, both PSS officers were newly appointed to the PSS and it was determined that they were being over-zealous in an attempt to demonstrate that they were being diligent in carrying out their security duties. Both officers immediately acknowledged the error of their judgement. In both incidents, the photographic images were immediately deleted in the presence of a PSS supervisor.

(d) Both PSS officers were counselled by DPS Security management.

(e) To prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, DPS has strengthened procedural documentation to ensure all PSS staff are aware of their responsibilities when escorting cleaners working in the Ministerial Wing. PSS supervisors have also been instructed to ensure that PSS staff strictly adhere to the approved procedures.