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Secretary
Department of Parliamentary Services
Dept of Parliamentary Services

Minute

Contact officer: Dr June Verrier
Tel. no.: 2470

Date: 24 February 2005
Ref. no.:

Ms Hilary Penfold QC
Secretary

Response to Minute on Parliamentary Library Publication 'Critical but stable: Australia's response to an infectious disease outbreak' no. 3 2004-2005 ISSN 1449-8464

1 I refer to your Minute to me dated 18 February 2005. You advised of your concerns in relation to the paper on infectious diseases which drew comment from Ms Jane Halton, Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing and Dr Greg Stewart, Deputy Director General - Population Health and Chief Health Officer of the NSW Department of Health.

2 As you noted, the Parliamentary Library has a role in raising issues for discussion. In pursuing this role we are always happy to receive feedback and will always immediately amend papers to ensure accuracy. I can assure you that we would not consider it appropriate to finalise a paper without a rigorous examination of the academic and other literature but agree that our specialists may be unable to investigate the views of all significant players. As for reliance on newspapers, I can also assure you that our specialists are well aware of their limits.

3 I note your instruction, at paragraph 10 of the Minute, that the paper be reconsidered to reflect new information provided by Ms Halton and Dr Stewart. You also suggested that changes be made to the paper to clarify the variety of issues that have arisen from the authors' research.

Proposal to withdraw the paper and workshop

4 I consider that the best way to achieve these changes is to take the paper down from the Web immediately and submit it to a workshop. As well, Senators and Members who may have printed copies will be advised of its temporary withdrawal. The workshop procedure is one of the standard quality control procedures applied to all major briefs. Unusually, the workshop control was not applied to this particular paper.

5 Consideration of a paper at a workshop includes review of its style and presentational form. Re-consideration of the paper at a workshop will enable all relevant new information to be synthesised in the paper in a systematic way.

'Links'

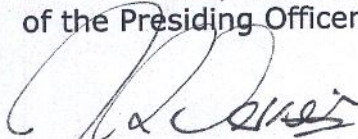
6 In light of my proposal to take the paper down from the Web, it may be prudent to revisit the issue of whether web links to the letters from Ms Halton and Dr Stewart are required providing such links. As I noted in my discussion with you on this matter, while at face value this may not appear to present a problem, the issue of placing links to particular stakeholders' advice in relation to Library briefs on the Library's website is one worthy of careful consideration. Any such move could establish a precedent in ways in which the DPS, and Senators and Members, might consider undesirable.

Clearer process clearance points

7 The issues that have arisen around this paper make more pressing the refinements of the Tracking Sheet for General Briefs and Publications (GB&Ps) which we have already discussed. The attached new proposed Tracking Sheet has clear sign off points to ensure that, in future, the full quality control regime has been followed before the release of a brief.

8 For your information, the workshop on 'Critical but stable: Australia's response to an infectious diseases outbreak' will take place on 8 March at 2pm.

9 To keep them informed, I will be sending a copy of this minute to the staff of the Presiding Officers, Mr Morris and Mr Paterson.



Dr J R Verrier
Assistant Secretary
Information and Research Service



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GENERAL BRIEFS and PUBLICATIONS TRACKING SHEET

Authority to proceed	Section:		Author(s):	
	Internal coordinator: (for consultants' papers or papers with more than one author)			
	Proposed title:			
	Type of publication:		Possible Audio Brief? Yes / No	
	Rationale/synopsis:			
	Nominated external reader(s)		Organisation:	Sent
				/ /
	Director's endorsement:		(signature)	/ /
	Other Directors advised:		/ /	
Assistant Secretary's approval:		(signature)	/ /	
Added to Work-in-Progress:		/ /	TARDIS number:	

Quality control	Workshop (if required): *		/ /	
	Workshop attendees:			
	Internal readers:			
	Returned from external reader(s) <input type="checkbox"/>		Author's sign off:	(signature)

Clearance (submit with external readers' comments and editor's mark-up copy)	To	Date submitted	Please Resubmit	Date Cleared	Signature
	Director				
	Editor				
	Assistant Secretary				
	Any reason why this brief should not be put on the internet? Yes / No				
	Any other comment				

* Some publications, e.g. Audio Briefs, Biographical Information, non-controversial Chronologies, are not workshopped.