

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2010

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Non-ongoing staff appointment**

Question: **P 6**

Hansard reference **F&PA 40, 24 May 2010**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 July 2010

Senator RONALDSON—I am sure that in November I will have some further information from someone who disagrees with you. When you were looking for someone to put on to assist in this role you, did you go out and advertise this through the Public Service?

Ms Graham—I would have to take that on notice.

Answer

1 In early 2008, with the resumption of normal Parliamentary business (after the late 2007 election), the Content Management Branch (**CMB**) was experiencing very heavy workloads. The CMB is responsible for Hansard and for the broadcasting of Chamber and Committee proceedings. In particular, the Assistant Secretary CMB, Ms Therese Lynch, wished to support the Directors in the Branch as they developed key performance indicators, contracts for external service providers, training needs and analysis, and induction programs for CMB staff.

2 Ms Lynch advised that she wished to provide support but avoid the high cost of using consultants. Instead she investigated the DPS temporary employment registers, but could not identify an appropriate candidate for the support role (which would have an intermittent workload). It was also not appropriate to second/transfer staff from (say) the DPS HR section because of their existing heavy workloads.

3 Ms Lynch then consulted experienced managers external to DPS who had been involved with similar tasks in the APS. Arising from this consultation, Mr Robert Konig was identified as having the appropriate skills. Mr Konig had previously been an SES-level officer with extensive public sector experience (especially with Austrade), but had since retired.

4 Mr Konig subsequently registered his name on the DPS temporary employment register. On 1 May 2008, Ms Lynch submitted to the DPS HR Section a *Request to engage a non-ongoing employee (irregular/intermittent)* form to employ Mr Konig. This was approved by the HR Director on 9 May 2008.

5 On 10 May 2008, Mr Konig accepted an offer of employment under paragraph 22(2) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*. He was employed at the PEL2 level as a non-ongoing employee, on an irregular and intermittent basis.

6 The Assistant Secretary and CMB Directors were very pleased with the work done by Mr Konig and his achievements during his term of engagement.

7 In July 2008, the then Assistant Secretary Building Services Branch (**BSB**) required HR assistance to facilitate and advise on significant changes to her Branch. Again, she wished to avoid the high cost of consultants, and it was not feasible to appoint or second existing DPS HR staff because of their heavy existing workloads.

8 After consulting with colleagues, including Ms Lynch, the Assistant Secretary BSB approached Mr Konig to attend a discussion with her and two Directors to assess his suitability for the work required in BSB. Mr Konig accepted a second offer of employment, again at the PEL2 level, and again on a non-ongoing irregular and intermittent basis.

9 During his employment with BSB, Mr Konig conducted one-on-one and group discussions with security staff and provided advice on ways to improve and strengthen roles, responsibilities, staff development and performance management arrangements within the Security section. As a result of this work, the management and administrative structure was streamlined. Two Director positions were reduced down to one and the number of supervisory layers between the Director and operational staff was reduced.

10 When his contract with the department expired on 10 August 2009, Mr Konig accepted a new offer of employment to undertake a range of work on an irregular and intermittent basis within both CMB and BSB.

11 The department was aware that Mr Konig was the spouse of the Chief Finance Officer. However, Mr Konig's work within the department had no interaction at all with the CFO Branch, nor did any officer of the CFO Branch have any involvement in the decisions to employ him.

12 From time to time DPS needs to employ people with considerable experience in the public sector, usually to complete tasks within a relatively short time horizon, and/or tasks where in-house staff do not have the time or the skills. In general, DPS prefers to employ these officers as non-ongoing Parliamentary Service staff, rather than the more expensive approach of using consultants. Such employees will frequently be either retired public servants, or public servants who have left for various reasons, but are again interested in public sector work. The temporary employment register is an important part of this cost-effective system.