

**SELECT COMMITTEE INTO
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT PERTH
MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2006**

SESSION FIVE

Members

**Hon Giz Watson (Chair)
Hon Norman Moore
Hon Graham Giffard**

Hearing commenced at 1.48 pm**KLARICH, MR DARREN****Principal Policy Advisor, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, examined:**

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee I welcome you to the meeting. You will have signed a document entitled "Information for Witnesses". Have you read and understood that document?

Mr Klarich: Yes, I have.

CHAIR: These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document to which you refer during the course of this hearing for the record. Please be aware of the microphones and try to speak into them. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as your transcript of evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise you that premature publication or disclosure of public evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege. Would you like to make a statement.

Mr Klarich: No, I have no opening statement, thank you.

CHAIR: Not a problem. Could you provide the committee with a brief summary of your background and how you came to be working as chief of staff in the office of the Minister for Education and Training, and over what period you were employed in that capacity?

[1.50 pm]

Mr Klarich: Yes, I can provide a brief summation of my background. I have worked for various state and federal members of Parliament. I have also worked for the public sector union and the Department of Justice in the labour relations and industrial relations field. I guess, politically, I have been around the traps so to speak for about the past 10 or 11 years. I was working for the Department of Justice when I applied for a position within the Minister for Education and Training's office, which is primarily an industrial relations position. I left the Department of Justice and took up that position. I guess that was in 2005, but do not quote me on that. About the middle of this year an opportunity arose in the minister's office for a chief of staff. The other chief of staff, Mr Joyce, had taken up a position in the Premier's office and the minister approached me and asked, in light of my many years of experience and my performance during my time in the office, whether I would be interested in the position of chief of staff. At that time I accepted the position.

CHAIR: Did the minister's office receive news summaries from the Government Media Office?

Mr Klarich: Yes, we did. I think there is the Media Monitors, which all members and some staffers receive from as well as trolling through newspapers and stuff in the course of our work.

CHAIR: Were those summaries provided by fax or e-mail?

Mr Klarich: E-mail.

CHAIR: To whom in the minister's office were these news summaries sent? I am thinking about Media Monitors.

Mr Klarich: To my knowledge it would have been the media person primarily. As you are aware, the minister's office has a media adviser. When I took over as chief of staff, I ensured that all our

policy people got it. We kept putting in requests. Some people did get it and some did not get it. I wanted all our policy people to get news summaries as well as clippings and that type of thing.

CHAIR: Are you saying all policy people would have received them?

Mr Klarich: In my tenure, no not all. Some did and some did not. We had about five policy people; some of those would have got them, plus of course the media people would have got them, so I cannot say that every policy person would have had media summaries.

CHAIR: What did the news summaries generally contain?

Mr Klarich: Things like transcripts from talkback radio, radio news, TV and comments or doorstops done at Parliament House - generally those types of thing.

CHAIR: What happened to the news summaries that were provided to the minister's office? Are they filed or stored in electronic or hard copy?

Mr Klarich: Usually, we would have a look at them; yes, they would get stored. Sometimes an issue might come up such as a federal or state issue. We would look at it and decide whether we should explore it or get details on it. They would be filed, but we would obviously go through the news and see what was relevant to our portfolio.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: If you found something relevant to your minister or portfolio, what would you then do?

Mr Klarich: We would have a look at it. For example, in my case, being in industrial relations - I am speaking from personal experience - we had negotiations with the teachers union, so obviously I would troll through the papers and, if it was brought to my attention that the union was saying something, I would look at it and probably get the department to provide a briefing or summation on it. I would let the minister know, let the media person know, weigh up the pros and cons of the situation, and when an issue might arise for us and how we could manage it, and that type of thing.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Did your minister have a set procedure for these matters relating to her portfolio?

Mr Klarich: In terms of what?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: In terms of her being advised of any news items that were of interest to her or that were about her portfolio?

Mr Klarich: It was primarily the job of the media and policy people to scan the media obviously and bring matters that we thought were relevant to the minister's attention.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Was there some standard process in which, as a matter of course, any media coverage of the minister or her portfolio was automatically provided to the minister, just as she receives every day the correspondence that she must deal with?

Mr Klarich: I am assuming the minister would have had copies of the media summations. Usually, we would have daily staff meetings. The first thing in the morning we look at the relevant issue for the day and have a discussion among the staff on that. To answer your question, there was no A to Z system. Generally, we would all scan the media and bring whatever came up as an issue to either the attention of the chief of staff or the principal policy officer or maybe, as a last resort, the minister. There was no set procedure. Not everything automatically went to the minister. There was a filtering system from media to policy and through to the chief of staff.

CHAIR: Did you as the minister's chief of staff, or other members of the minister's staff, brief or inform the minister on relevant media? Perhaps you have already answered that to an extent.

Mr Klarich: I can only say that I would brief her. From personal experience, for example, when I was chief of staff I was still overseeing the industrial portfolio. There were a number of industrial relations matters, federally, that were happening, so I took it on myself to inform the minister about

that. There were some assessments and other things with the state school teachers union, which I worked closely with, so I obviously brought that to the minister's attention and gave her a briefing on it. To answer your question: depending on what it was I guess. As you can appreciate, there are virtually hundreds of things on a daily basis to deal with. As advisers or chiefs of staff we make a call on what the minister sees and is told.

CHAIR: Did the minister's office receive news summaries from the Government Media Office or the CCC in relation to the CCC media statement dated 1 June 2006?

Mr Klarich: In all honesty, I could not give you a definite answer on that. If your question is, "Did we specifically get any information from Media Monitors or other sources about the CCC investigation", I cannot give you a categorical yes or no because I simply do not know. I was not in a position at that stage to know because I was still the policy person heavily involved with the industrial relations side of things and, at that time in particular, with the OBE. My job was to negotiate settlement of the OBE issue. My time was taken up, but I cannot give you a categorical yes or no.

CHAIR: Did the minister's office receive news summaries again either from the Government Media Office or the CCC of media stories in relation to the CCC's stated intention of reporting to the Parliament on the capacity of the Department of Education and Training to deal with allegations of sexual misconduct towards students by staff?

Mr Klarich: I do not want to seem as though I am skirting anything. I simply cannot give a categorical yes or no. There may well have been; I simply do not know. I was not in a position to know, so I cannot give you a definite answer I am sorry. That is my answer to the best of my ability.

CHAIR: Whilst chief of staff what knowledge did you have of any CCC investigation into allegations of sexual contact with children against any officer of the department?

Mr Klarich: During my tenure as chief of staff I did not have any knowledge of a comprehensive or specific CCC investigation into child abuse allegations.

CHAIR: When did you become aware that the CCC was going to publish a report on five selected case studies of sexual contact with children by persons of authority in the Department of Education and Training in WA?

Mr Klarich: It was on the Thursday. I apologise for not giving you an accurate date. I am sure it is in transcripts. The CCC met us on a Thursday, at which the minister and I were present. The CCC briefed us on the report and said that it had done a comprehensive report, looked at five case studies that they thought were typical and said that it was intending to table the report in Parliament on the Monday. That was the first that I heard of such an investigation during my tenure as chief of staff.

[2.00 pm]

CHAIR: So perhaps 12 October?

Mr Klarich: I would say it was 12 October. I think it was a Thursday. I think the CCC briefed us around 4.15 or 4.35 pm. I would have to check my diary, but it was late in the afternoon, I recall. The two gentlemen were Mr Watson and his executive director.

CHAIR: The committee clerk has just provided you with a copy of the CCC media statement dated 1 June 2006. Can you confirm that you were not aware of the CCC's investigation or its proposal to table a report in Parliament, particularly in light of that media statement, which was dated in June?

Mr Klarich: I can categorically say that I was not aware of the media statement or the investigation. I add that it came as a personal shock to me when it was brought to our attention during the fallout from the tabling of the report.

CHAIR: Would you have expected to have seen that media statement on that day?

Mr Klarich: Myself personally or the office?

CHAIR: I will start with you personally.

Mr Klarich: No. A lot of the time, honourable member, certain issues come up. People in the office will say that such and such an issue has come up and ask whether you have seen it. If they have not, we might have a discussion about it. I was not aware of it and certainly no-one had brought it to my attention during that period. I think you had a part B to your question.

CHAIR: Would you have expected someone else in the office to have dealt with that after seeing it come in?

Mr Klarich: Once again I cannot categorically say yes or no. Perhaps, maybe, but I personally cannot provide a yes or no answer.

CHAIR: Did you ever brief or provide any information to the minister either in writing or verbally on the proposed CCC report prior to 12 October 2006?

Mr Klarich: No, not prior. I only became aware of it on 12 October, as I stated.

CHAIR: Did you ever brief or provide any information to the minister or any staff of the office of the minister on Mr Peter Browne's complaint management review report?

Mr Klarich: No. I was not aware of that report either. I did not provide anything. I simply was not aware of that report. The first I became aware of it was following 12 October. Obviously when we delved into the matter further we became aware that there was a Mr Browne report. That was the first that I had personally heard about that report.

CHAIR: When did you resign as the minister's chief of staff?

Mr Klarich: Melbourne Cup day - 7 November.

CHAIR: Did your resignation as the minister's chief of staff have anything to do with the issues surrounding the CCC report or any of the subsequent events?

Mr Klarich: No, it did not. We had issues in terms of staffing and office management. Let me just say that there were creative differences. It was in light of that, not the CCC. It was simply office management.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I notice that you started with the minister on 14 July.

Mr Klarich: I think it was 14 or 15 July. Do you mean as the chief of staff?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Yes.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: The MCEETYA conference was on 7 July. Were you involved in that?

Mr Klarich: No, I was not involved in the MCEETYA conference.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Do you know whether your predecessor was?

Mr Klarich: My predecessor may have been. My focus during the initial three or four weeks of taking over as chief of staff was the outcomes issue. That was my primary focus for those first few weeks.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I am interested to know about your knowledge of the CCC's annual report.

Mr Klarich: In terms of whether I have read the report?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Have you read it and are you aware that it contained a reference to the investigation that we are talking about?

Mr Klarich: No, I have not read the report. I was not aware that it contains a reference to the investigation.

CHAIR: In terms of people within the minister's office who directly deal with media, can you tell me who the people were when you were dealing with this matter in October? Maybe they are the same people.

Mr Klarich: We have had a couple of media advisers. Mark McGill is the current media adviser. There was Michelle White and Tony Monaghan. For the life of me I cannot recall which one it would have been. That is the succession -

CHAIR: It was one of those three.

Mr Klarich: Yes.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: You have given the names in reverse order?

Mr Klarich: My understanding is that Mark McGill is the current media person. Before him was Michelle White and before her Mr Tony Monaghan.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Have you had any contact with any government official or been contacted by any government official about the matter that is the subject of this inquiry since the meeting you had with the minister and the CCC?

Mr Klarich: In what respect? In terms of providing a briefing?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Yes.

Mr Klarich: Can you be more specific? I obviously had meetings with departmental people as a course of the investigations after it came to light. Are you talking about other ministers or members of Parliament?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: All of those. With whom from any government agency or ministerial office have you discussed this issue since the report was tabled?

Mr Klarich: I had a discussion with the Premier's office in terms of providing it with a briefing or an overview.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: When was that?

Mr Klarich: That would have been on the Friday. I think the CCC informed us on Thursday, 12 October. It would have been on the Friday when I gave a brief overview in terms of the report that was going to be handed down and tabled.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Have you discussed it with anybody in the past two weeks?

Mr Klarich: No. People might generally banter but I have not discussed it in a specific briefing whatsoever.

CHAIR: That completes our questions.

Mr Klarich: Thank you.

Hearing concluded at 2.08 pm
