

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT PERTH
THURSDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2006**

SESSION THREE

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 2.11 pm**JOYCE, MR PAUL****Principal Policy Officer, Office of the Premier, examined:**

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

Mr Joyce: Yes.

CHAIR: In what capacity do you appear before the committee?

Mr Joyce: I am here as former chief of staff to the Minister for Education and Training.

CHAIR: These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. The transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for 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 the transcript of your public 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 material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

We will go straight to questions if that is okay with you.

Mr Joyce: Sure.

CHAIR: In your evidence to the committee on Monday you stated that you had no knowledge of any CCC investigation into allegations of sexual contact with children against any officer of the department whilst you were chief of staff in the office of the Minister for Education and Training. Do you still stand by that evidence?

Mr Joyce: Yes.

CHAIR: In your evidence you stated that you did not become aware of the media statement dated 1 June 2006 until some time in October 2006. Do you still stand by that evidence?

Mr Joyce: Yes.

CHAIR: Yesterday the committee received evidence from Ms Michelle White, the former press secretary to the Minister for Education and Training, who indicated that she had spoken to you about the CCC media statement on both 1 June and 2 June 2006. Do you recall having such a conversation with Ms White?

Mr Joyce: None whatsoever, Chair.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Could you repeat that?

Mr Joyce: I cannot remember any discussion with Ms White about that matter whatsoever.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: You say you cannot remember whereas your previous answers were quite emphatic - "Yes" and "Yes". Is it fair to say you did not have a conversation with Ms White?

Mr Joyce: Difficult for me to say that, member. Michelle White was someone whom I worked with and I thought Michelle was a hardworking, decent person. I do not have any reason to dispute her evidence other than to say I cannot remember any discussions with Michelle or anyone else

about a CCC investigation or matters to do with sexual misconduct or that had to do with the department's handling of sexual misconduct in the department.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Could I perhaps quote from her uncorrected evidence, which might assist your memory. Ms White said -

I remember getting news summaries about the CCC investigation that day, -

That is 1 June -

but I cannot recall specifically. I just remember that that was an issue at the time and it was something I discussed with the department and the chief of staff when I got the initial press release and then when I saw the subsequent news summaries.

I asked, "You discussed it with the department?" She said, "Yes." I asked, "And the chief of staff?" She said, "Yes." I asked, "Who was the chief of staff at that time?" and she said, "Paul Joyce." She also raised this matter on another occasion during her evidence; that she discussed it with you at the same time as she discussed it with the policy adviser who was accompanying the minister on a trip to Wiluna on that day. Do you continue to inform the committee that you knew nothing about the CCC press release and the associated media coverage?

Mr Joyce: I cannot remember any discussion with Michelle White about these matters. I was genuinely surprised when in October I learnt of the CCC investigation and learnt of the nature of those investigations. I was genuinely surprised. I have absolutely no memory whatsoever of discussions with Michelle about this matter. I am not suggesting that Michelle's evidence is incorrect; I just simply cannot remember the discussions that she referred to.

By way of comment, I have always taken my position and job pretty seriously in these roles. In terms of a personal expectation of myself I would be disappointed if I was made aware of the issues and the nature of those issues and did not seek further information. If that is what has happened, I am pretty disappointed in myself personally, but I can only say that I cannot remember any discussions of that nature whatsoever.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Can I put it this way: is it possible that she had discussions with you but you simply cannot remember?

Mr Joyce: It is possible. It would depend, I suppose, on how the discussions might have taken place. Ministerial offices are pretty busy work environments. There are a lot of issues that are raised with you on a daily basis, particularly in a portfolio like Education and Training, which is, as you know, one of the biggest portfolios in government. It is possible in amongst all of the other things that you deal with that something is raised with you that you do not appreciate the significance of at the time. As I said before, I would be disappointed in myself if I was sat down and was told there was a CCC investigation, particularly into the matters that were being investigated and the concerns that the CCC had, and I did not follow up on those discussions and seek further information from the department. I clearly did not do that and, as I say, I cannot remember any discussions with Michelle about those matters.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Just further to Ms White's evidence - again, I am quoting from the uncorrected version; I should emphasise that - after she had advised the committee that you were the chief of staff with whom she had discussed the matter, I then asked, "That was on 1 or 2 June?" She said, "I think it was both days, actually." Mr Giffard said, "What did you discuss with them?" and she said -

I just brought it to his attention and told him that it had come in and that, obviously, it was a media issue and something we might have to deal with. I had a similar discussion with the department. I was told by the department that it was being handled at department level and that we were not to get involved at that point. There was so much else going on at the time that it was, like, "Okay, we'll deal with it when we have to."

Mr Giffard then said, "When you said, 'This could be a bit of an issue', what were you referring to?" She said, "The fact that it was an investigation and that it could be controversial." Again, does that refresh your memory at all in respect of this matter?

Mr Joyce: None whatsoever, member. When I learnt yesterday that that evidence had been given - I have given it a lot of thought and I just cannot remember any discussions of that type whatsoever.

[14.20 pm]

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Have you had any discussions in the last week with anyone from the minister's office or the Premier's department about your evidence?

Mr Joyce: Not in terms of my evidence. When I was called again I obviously let people in my office know that I had been recalled to the committee. I had a call from the minister's office yesterday, I understand at the request of the committee's assistant, seeking my contact details.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Joyce.

Hearing concluded at 2.30 pm
