

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

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

SESSION SIX

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 2.35 pm**JOYCE, MR PAUL****Principal Policy Adviser, Office of the Premier, examined:**

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome you to this meeting. To begin with, will you please state the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

Mr Joyce: I am here in my capacity as a former Chief of Staff to the Minister for Education and Training.

CHAIR: You will have signed a document entitled "Information for Witnesses". Have you read and understood that document?

Mr Joyce: 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 the transcript of your 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 an opening statement?

Mr Joyce: No; thank you, chair.

CHAIR: Please start by providing a brief summary of your background, how you came to work as chief of staff in the office of the Minister for Education and Training, and over what period you were employed as chief of staff.

Mr Joyce: I was approached by the minister around September of last year, I think, to work in her office. At that time I was working in the office of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. I accepted that position, which was a policy officer's position. In January the chief of staff at that time left to go back into the public service, and the minister offered me the position which I took. That was in January of this year and I was there until July of this year.

CHAIR: Did the minister's office received news summaries from the Government Media Office; and, if yes, how were these news summaries provided; for example, by fax or e-mail?

Mr Joyce: I understand the news summaries were e-mailed to certainly one person in our office - I am not sure beyond that - but I understand that they were e-mailed to ministerial office staff.

CHAIR: Were they e-mailed to a specific person to start with?

Mr Joyce: I understand all the media advisers get copies of the news summaries. I do not believe that they are sent to all ministerial staff, but certainly the news summaries are sent to media advisers. I would get transcripts of media issues; I would also get the video summary of the television news reports from the night before. I do not believe I was in receipt of the daily summary of news articles.

CHAIR: What did the news summaries generally contain?

Mr Joyce: Are we talking about the news summaries as opposed to the video summaries of the television news reports?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Joyce: Usually a line or two; sometimes a bit more depending on what the news article was about.

CHAIR: What happened to the news summaries that were provided to the minister's office? Were they stored in a particular way, or was there a procedure in place?

Mr Joyce: I am not sure if there was a central filing system for those summaries. I do not know.

CHAIR: What was the practice of the minister's office in relation to the media that you, or other members of the minister's staff considered the minister should know about? How was that decided?

Mr Joyce: Some issues in the media would obviously be something that we would be aware of; other issues would have been new to us. Certainly, we would not necessarily bring every media issue to the minister's attention. We would make a judgment, I suppose, on the importance and sensitivity of the issue; depending on that we would make a judgement about whether it needed to be brought to the minister's attention.

CHAIR: Did you, as the minister's chief of staff, or other members of the minister's staff, brief or inform the minister of relevant media? You yourself?

Mr Joyce: Yes. Again, depending on what the issue might be. We would not bring every media issue relating to the portfolio to her attention; it would depend on the significance of it.

CHAIR: In addition to that, how was the information on media conveyed to the minister, and how often?

Mr Joyce: In terms of how often, I find it difficult to answer that; I am not sure. It would be conveyed in a number of different ways. We would verbally let the minister know that an issue had arisen. Alternatively, we could get more information from the department - if it was something that we were not aware of - and provide that information, as I say, either verbally or in writing to the minister.

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

Mr Joyce: In terms of the CCC, are you asking if that was sent directly by -

CHAIR: Was it received -

Mr Joyce: From the CCC. I do not know.

CHAIR: Either from the CCC or the GMO?

Mr Joyce: I understand that the news summary was sent out every day, so that would include 1 June; and I understand that a news summary was sent out on that day, which made reference to that matter.

CHAIR: You are saying that you could feel comfortable in saying that that would have got to the minister's office?

Mr Joyce: I understand that it was sent. Just going back to my previous comment, I did not receive the news summaries. I did not see it myself, but I understand that it was sent to the minister's office.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: What do you base that understanding on?

Mr Joyce: At the time in my role in the Premier's office when the CCC put out a media statement - I cannot remember the date but some time; it might have been 18 October, which referred to a

media statement on 1 June. I think that was the first time that the 1 June statement got a bit of certainly media coverage in terms of the issue of reference to the investigation. At that time we sought advice about whether there were transcripts of those radio stories about the issue; whether it was included in the media summary, and I understand that it was.

[2.40 pm.]

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: The question you were asked was in relation to the media statement.

Mr Joyce: Yes.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Are you saying that the news summaries would have been but not the media statement itself? Do you have a comment on that?

Mr Joyce: I do not know whether the CCC provided our office with the media statement directly, if I understood your question.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I just want to get clear what you are saying. You are saying that on or around mid-October you made inquiries and you were advised that on or around 1 June news reports relating to that 1 June media statement contained in news summaries were conveyed to the minister's office.

Mr Joyce: A media statement was put out by the CCC, I understand by recollection, around 18 October. It made reference to a media statement that had been put out on 1 June. I understand that Geoff Hutchison on ABC Radio referred to the media statement of 1 June. At that point we sought advice as to whether that had been part of the media summaries and whether it had been part of the transcripts that get sent out to ministerial offices. I was advised at that time that it was not part of the transcripts that were sent out and that none of the media stories on this particular matter were transcribed but that it was part of the summary.

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

Mr Joyce: My understanding is that I did not see summaries that were sent out that day, but as a result of my inquiries in October I understand that the summaries were sent to every ministerial office, including our office at the time.

CHAIR: In that case, did you or another member of the minister's staff inform the minister of the CCC's investigation into the department or its proposal to table the report?

Mr Joyce: I was not aware of the investigation at that time.

CHAIR: So you could not do that. What knowledge did you have while chief of staff of any CCC investigation into allegations of sexual contact with children against any officer of the department?

Mr Joyce: None.

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 in authority in the Department of Education and Training?

Mr Joyce: I cannot remember the dates, I am sorry, but I think they tabled it on 16 October. On the Thursday prior to that, some time in the late afternoon, I had a call from the minister's office to tell me that the CCC had briefed them on this matter and that the CCC had advised them that an embargoed copy would be sent to the Premier the following morning, which would have been the Friday morning. That was my first knowledge of the investigation.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Why did the minister's office call you?

Mr Joyce: I think to let us know that they had been briefed by the CCC and that a copy was going to be coming to the Premier's office the following morning. In my role in the Premier's office, education and training is one of the broad range of portfolios that I deal with.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: When you say "us" you mean the Premier's office?

Mr Joyce: Yes.

CHAIR: I provide you with a copy of the CCC media statement of 1 June. Could you indicate to the committee in the light of that media statement that you were not aware that the CCC's investigation was afoot or that it had a proposal to table that report in Parliament?

Mr Joyce: I was not aware until that time in October after the CCC had briefed the minister.

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 complaints management review report?

Mr Joyce: I cannot recall briefing either the minister or any staff. I was certainly aware that the review was taking place and that the review had made a number of recommendations which I understood the department had given an undertaking to implement, but I cannot remember how I knew that - whether it was a written briefing or a verbal briefing from the department. I do not have any recollection of a discussion with the minister or staff about that, but I was certainly aware of the review.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Did you attend the MCEETYA meeting in July with the minister and the director general?

Mr Joyce: No.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Did anybody from your office attend, other than those two?

Mr Joyce: Normally a ministerial staff member would attend ministerial council meetings. I do not know who attended that meeting, but I am sure that a ministerial staff member did. I am not sure who did.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: But you did not?

Mr Joyce: I did not.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Has anybody from the government in the broadest sense of the word spoken to you about this inquiry in the last two weeks?

Mr Joyce: Are you able to clarify that question for me?

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Have you been in discussions with anybody from the government - the minister's offices, any government agencies or whatever - in the last two weeks about this particular inquiry?

Mr Joyce: Last week I had a call from the minister's office. I understand that they had been asked to provide documents to the committee. They asked me to do a search of my e-mail system to see if there was anything there from the department in relation to this, and I did that search and contacted the minister's office and spoke to them about that and let them know that I did not.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: That you -

Mr Joyce: Sorry - that I did not have any documents from the department in relation to this.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Are you able to tell us when you first became aware of the Browne review being conducted?

Mr Joyce: Member, I cannot. As I say, I do -

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Would it have been earlier in the year?

Mr Joyce: Potentially. I took on the role of chief of staff in January. I understand a review was completed some time in March or April of this year. Certainly I was aware that the review was being undertaken, but I cannot remember how I knew of that - whether it was written briefings from the department or whether it was discussions with the department itself. I was certainly aware of it.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Do you recall receiving a briefing from Mr Paul Albert at around that time in April or May this year on the Browne review?

Mr Joyce: No.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Joyce. That is the end of our questions this afternoon. We appreciate your coming.

Hearing concluded at 2.52 pm
