

**PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES  
COMMITTEE**

**COMMENTS MADE BY THE MEMBER FOR CANNINGTON**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2010**

**SESSION ONE  
CLOSED SESSION**

**Members**

**The Speaker (Mr G.A. Woodhams) (Chairman)  
Mr M. McGowan (Deputy Chairman)  
Mr F.M. Logan  
Mr M.W. Sutherland  
Mr F.A. Alban**

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**Hearing commenced at 10.00 am****COREY, MS BELINDA JAYNE****Reporting Services Manager, Parliamentary Services Department, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you for your attendance before the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into comments made by the member for Cannington on 16 September 2010. You have been provided with a copy of the committee's specific terms of reference. This hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Hansard will be making a transcript of today's proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist us if you could properly identify the documents. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**Ms Corey:** Yes, I have.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

**Ms Corey:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form?

**Ms Corey:** Yes, I did.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

**Ms Corey:** No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It will be helpful for all of us, particularly with respect to Hansard, if you could explain in a very general way the process for the production and correction of transcripts.

**Ms Corey:** Reporters sit in the chamber and they work in what we call 10-minute turns. At the conclusion of that 10-minute turn, they have about an hour to edit and format the speech in accordance with Hansard's editing guidelines. The speech is then edited further by a subeditor. At that point it is compiled and sent to the member for correction. The member has until four o'clock the day after the speech was made to submit any corrections. Once a speech has been sent to the member, the *Hansard* document is proofread a further two times before it is published in the corrected *Hansard*. When a member returns a duplicate for correction, we look at the nature of the changes that were made and make a decision about whether it is an acceptable change in accordance with our corrections policy which, by and large, is that words that were not said may not be added and words that were said may not be deleted. In deciding whether such corrections are allowed, we also have regard for the mood of the debate and the potential sensitivity of certain types of statements.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much for that; it is particularly helpful. If a member disputes, for argument's sake, what is reported in the uncorrected proof, how does Reporting Services verify what was said by a member?

**Ms Corey:** We refer back to our audio recording.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is there anything else that you would refer to?

**Ms Corey:** Just to the audio recording. The context of the debate plays a big part as well but generally we refer back to the audio recording of the debate.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Who would check that? Who would physically do that?

**Ms Corey:** Depending on the nature of the correction, it is either the subeditor—we have a subeditor in charge of each house's *Hansard*—or it may be referred to me as the Reporting Services manager.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I would like to take a look at some things specific to 16 September. I am sure you have all the documentation in front of you but I would also like to get it up on the screen for everybody's benefit. Firstly, could you look at that uncorrected proof from Thursday, 16 September. Everybody may like to look at the documentation they have. I will ask David to get up on the screen the dupe of Hansard that has some writing on it. I think everybody can find that document themselves. Belinda, can you tell us whose handwriting is on the page? Is that possible?

**Ms Corey:** The words "as stated" were written by one of our subeditors. As to the rest of the handwriting, I could not tell you whose it is.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How are you able to make decisions based on a member's handwriting? I am making the presumption that you are getting the document back from a member that might have some corrections on it. When you get some corrections from a member, is it always possible to know whether it is his or her handwriting? Are you able to do that?

**Ms Corey:** With some members, we learn their handwriting. That was a duplicate that would have been sent to the member in a duplicate wrapper, and members are required to initial that duplicate wrapper when they return their speech. I presume that the duplicate, with its wrapper, would have gone to the Hansard office. It has been stamped by the Hansard office, so the correction would have been processed on that basis.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I would like you to elaborate a little further on that and the page we see on the screen. Whose initial is on the page?

**Ms Corey:** There is no initial on the page. The initial would be on the duplicate wrapper.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There is no initial on the page at all. What is the initial down the side?

**Ms Corey:** That is not an initial; that is an abbreviation for "not given"—"NG".

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In other words, it was not agreed to.

**Ms Corey:** Yes.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** And "as stated" means as it was said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** "Not given" or "NG".

**Ms Corey:** "As stated" was written by the subeditor, making the notation that the words would remain as stated.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We will just go back a couple of pages to the larger version. For our information and our understanding of the process, what does the date stamp indicate?

**Ms Corey:** The date stamp shows the date and time that it was received in the Reporting Services office. The member would have made the correction and initialled the duplicate wrapper and it was transmitted to the Reporting Services office. Each page with a correction on it is then stamped and a time put in it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I have one final question and then I would like to throw it open to other members of the committee. Corrections have been made to the uncorrected proof of 16 September

2010 but these are not the corrections marked on the dupe. Can you tell us the process that was undertaken in this specific case?

**Ms Corey:** When there is a concern that sometimes the correction may try to strengthen or soften remarks or go away from what was actually reported or given the sensitivity of the debate, the reporter or the subeditor refers to the audio recording. On that basis, the words that were reported were not exactly what the member said. The member had sought to make a change to that. Given the sensitivity of the issue, a decision was made by the subeditor that the words that the member said should be included in the corrected *Hansard*.

[10.10 am]

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I was just saying to the committee earlier that from my experience in the Parliament, I would probably make a correction to every speech that I give. I never check whether the corrections are accepted; they just disappear into history, if you like. In this case this member has gone to great length to correct the *Hansard* more comprehensively. Firstly, is that more comprehensive than normal? Secondly, I am still a little confused as to why in this case *Hansard* did not accept it but in other cases *Hansard* does accept a change, even though verbatim. For instance, on another occasion, which I will detail in a moment, a member said something that was not reflected in the final version. Can you explain exactly why changes to what was said verbatim are sometimes accepted and why changes were not accepted on this occasion?

**Ms Corey:** As I said earlier, corrections are determined in accordance with the mood of the debate, what was actually said in the house and whether there are errors of fact. On this occasion there seemed to be an accusation against a member about things involving the CCC. It seemed to us that we should err on the side of caution in allowing a correction to something like that and instead reflect—what the member actually said.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The example I wanted to give to you occurred during a debate—you will not be familiar with it—on that final Thursday. The member for Jandakot—it struck me because when I read the debate afterwards, I noticed the words were different—was referring to the member for West Swan. The word he used on that occasion was “bereaved” but the word “aggrieved” appeared in the *Hansard*. During the debate he said, “If the member for West Swan still feels bereaved, I apologise. Whether the member feels bereaved or not, I am man enough to stand here and say I am really sorry.” That is what he said because I was sitting there listening. I thought it was unusual. In the final version of *Hansard*, the word “aggrieved” appears instead of the word “bereaved” but that is not what he said. Are you saying you made a judgement call to correct what he said because the word “bereaved” obviously refers to the death of someone and he made a mistake in his language?

**Ms Corey:** Without knowing how it was reported or whether a correction was made in the first instance, “bereaved” is the wrong word to use in that context. Members use what is clearly a wrong word from time to time, and I suppose “bereaved” does not fit in the context. “Aggrieved” was the word he would have been searching for.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** On some occasions will *Hansard* change the verbatim words of what a member said —

**Ms Corey:** If it is incorrectly used.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** — depending on the judgement call of the subeditor as to whether the member used the correct or incorrect word?

**Ms Corey:** Yes.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Can I just confirm that the stamp referred to on the document is 17 September 2010, which is the day after?

**Ms Corey:** The Friday.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is 2.30 pm, so it is within the time frame that is normally allowed.

**Ms Corey:** Yes.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member for Cannington made some fairly comprehensive changes. By what you have said, he made them the day after the debate, and sent them in by fax, I assume, which is the normal way that we do it. Is that correct?

**Ms Corey:** I do not think it was by fax because there is no fax imprint on it. Other than that, I do not know how it came to the office.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Okay, but it was the day after the actual debate. Ordinarily, because of the lateness of the hour, I assume it was faxed through from his electorate office. It is obviously a thought-through change. Do you get changes of this nature very often—crossed out words here and there?

**Ms Corey:** On average, we get about 230 corrections during a two-house sitting week. Some are just a word and some are re-rendering.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am sorry, Belinda; can you repeat that number?

**Ms Corey:** About 230.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Over what period of time?

**Ms Corey:** In a normal two-house sitting week; that is, both houses sitting. It is hard to tell how many would be similar to that but a fair few would be similar in nature.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Have you ever done an analysis of how many of those you accept versus how many you do not accept?

**Ms Corey:** We generally accept about 85 per cent of the corrections, so about 15 per cent are not accepted.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** But on this occasion you decided you were not going to accept it. Who made that decision?

**Ms Corey:** The subeditor in charge of the Assembly *Hansard*.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Who is that?

**Ms Corey:** Laurie Mansell.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Does he consult or does he just listen to the tape and make the decision?

**Ms Corey:** He did not feel the need to consult on this occasion. He listened to the tape and made the change.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Mr Mansell will make the change and it will appear in the final record of *Hansard*, which will sit on the shelves for the duration as history. Does he not call the member and say, “This is my view”? The member concerned does not have any opportunity to say, “This is what I said, and if you go to this point in the debate and listen to it jointly”? Do you not provide that opportunity to a member, even when it is controversial like this?

**Ms Corey:** It is not our practice to advise members of the outcome of the corrections.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member made these changes, they were somehow sent to you the day after the debate and the change was made by Mr Mansell. The next thing the member knew of it, unless he scrolls through the *Hansard*, which is unlikely, is when the debate occurred on the following Thursday.

**Ms Corey:** That would have been the case.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Belinda, I take you to the words “the member for Wanneroo can explain his behaviour”. Rather than listening to the audio tape, if you watch the video, you can hear that the member for Cannington is speaking quickly. I can accept the fact that by listening to the audio tape, the subeditor would have made the call that the member for Cannington has said “the member for

Wanneroo can explain himself, and other members”. In speaking quickly, it does come across like that. The member for Cannington was trying to indicate to Hansard that that is not what he intended. He was intending to say “the member for Wanneroo and another” as opposed to “and other”. After that, it follows on with a grammatical change—“they” versus “he”. I will just pick up on something that the member for Rockingham indicated. The member wrote to Hansard within the allotted time frame, saying, “What I really meant to say was this”. This being a sensitive issue, I cannot understand why that was not picked up.

**Ms Corey:** It was picked up to the extent that the member’s words were used in the corrected *Hansard*. Instead of saying, “the member for Wanneroo and other members can explain” the corrected *Hansard* states, “The member for Wanneroo can explain himself, and other members can explain.”

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The words “other members” was included afterwards.

**Ms Corey:** No. He said “other members”. He sought to change that to “another member”, and that is the correction we did not allow.

[10.20 am]

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** If you watch the video, it can be interpreted both ways—“and other” or “another”. By writing this and deliberately getting it in in quite an extensive way before the four o’clock cut-off point, the member for Cannington is indicating that no matter how you hear it, this is what he meant to say. I wonder why that was not picked up.

**Mr M.W. SUTHERLAND:** I do not know whether Ms Corey can answer these questions about the intention of the member for Cannington. The only thing that she can tell us about are the mechanisms that happened to make the changes. I do not think she is in a position to talk about the intentions.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I am not going to the decision that Belinda made herself, just the process. This probably comes back to the decision made by the subeditor more than Belinda. In one case, *Hansard* is corrected for the purposes of grammatical authenticity, unless the member has indicated that he thinks he got it wrong and this is what he meant to say. The subeditor made the call because as far as he was concerned, that is what he heard.

**Ms Corey:** The subeditor has made the decision, which I support, that given the sensitivity of the statement in question, and given the fact that it was heard in the chamber and it was broadcast on the internet, so it was heard by any number of people, it was best to err on the side of caution and not allow the change to the words “and other members”, which was said.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Just for clarification, in some of the opening questions I asked you a series of questions and you actually indicated the sort of things that Hansard considers permissible in terms of changes to the transcript. Could you take us through that again? It is pretty central to what we are discussing at the moment. Could you give us as much detail as possible on what is permissible from a Hansard perspective?

**Ms Corey:** If it is an error of transcription—if it is our mistake—we will certainly allow the change. If it seeks to clarify some ambiguity, generally we will allow the change. It could be argued that that change sought to clarify ambiguity but then it was a change to something that was quite sensitive. I am just looking for the policy that I have here. Generally, if a member seeks to add words that were not spoken or delete words that were spoken, we do not allow those changes either.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have a written policy?

**Ms Corey:** We have a written internal policy, which I can make available to the committee.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think there is some confusion around what the policy is, which is interesting because during the debate on 23 September, when this matter was referred to this committee, the Leader of the House, the Minister for Police, gave his interpretation of the words and stated —

Mr Speaker, *Hansard* is the correct version of what happens in this house, verbatim, and members make note of what people say. Just because, afterwards, a member may think, “I’d better change that. I could get into trouble for that; I’ll change that”, that is not an excuse.

The first part of what he said was “*Hansard* is the correct version of what happens in this house, verbatim” but that is not always the case.

**Ms Corey:** That is not the case.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Let us say I was making a speech in which I was having a go about figures and I said 54 500 and when I got it back, I thought it was a bit high and that it should be 52 000. If I change that, would you allow that change?

**Ms Corey:** It would very much depend on the context of the statement. If you were in a general debate and you made that change, that would generally be accepted because it was an error of fact. If you are having an argument with, say, the Treasurer over the veracity of certain figures, we would not allow that change.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** When the Leader of the House said “verbatim”, that is incorrect. *Hansard* will make judgement calls on occasion. You made a judgement call in relation to the member for Cannington, which is different to a judgement call you might make on another occasion. Is that correct?

**Ms Corey:** We very much keep in mind the mood of the debate.

**Mr F.A. ALBAN:** Belinda, the argument revolves around the member saying “member”, using the singular, rather than “members”, the plural. The paragraph above that, which was not sought to be changed, says “members opposite have had their names expunged”. I was in the house when the debate occurred. It was clearly about members. If you were going to change the word “member” to a plural in the paragraph below, you would have had to change “members” in the paragraph above. Why was that not asked for?

**Ms Corey:** I cannot answer that.

**Mr M.W. SUTHERLAND:** It seems that the general rule would be that if it was a grammatical error or “bereaved” instead of “aggrieved”, it would be accepted but when things become controversial, you have said that words not said cannot be added and words cannot be deleted that have been said. I think that is the crux of this thing. *Hansard*’s policy states —

Members may not add words that were not spoken nor delete words that were spoken.

That is in the document you provided.

**Ms Corey:** That is also in the *Members’ Handbook* and on our intranet page.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Is it worth us watching the video with Belinda here or not?

**The CHAIRMAN:** We could.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Not the whole thing.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you just want to go to the particular words in question?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Yes, the words in question.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you going to have a question with respect to this, Mark?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am still unsure what the words were. The whole thing went for about five minutes. I am trying to get to the bottom of it. Belinda, do you watch the video or do you listen to it?

**Ms Corey:** We listen to the digital audio.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you not watch the video?

**Ms Corey:** We do not watch the video. The digital audio program is an eight-channel recorded feed. For transcription purposes, it is a lot better than the video. We can isolate channels.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The crucial bit in this context seems to me to be whether the word is “name” or “names”—whether the “s” is on the end or not. Is that correct? Sorry, I had the wrong word; it is “member” or “members”.

[DVD played.]

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have a question that comes out of that?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I do. I went through the written transcript of that entire period whilst I was listening to the audio and the words in every sentence in nearly every context were different from what was written. The words “you know” were in there and he used completely different formats of words to what is written here. My hearing of what he said was the word “name” as opposed to “names” in the crucial sentence. I suppose I am not asking you for an expert opinion on that, although you are an expert in this sort of stuff. Am I correct in what I heard?

**Ms Corey:** The member used the word “name”. However, when the sentence was edited, we applied a grammatical concept of agreement, which is that all the nouns, verbs and pronouns have to be equal in number. Every other element of that sentence was plural. “Name” was the only word that was singular and on that basis, it was made a plural.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We listened to the few paragraphs beforehand. His actual spoken words are very different to the written words. Did you go through it the same as I did?

**Ms Corey:** I did. In my opinion, it was in accordance with our editing policy. Things like “you know”, “I mean” and those sorts of phrases we describe as filler words to a degree. They do not add anything to the argument. We try to edit it to provide clarity for the reader and removing those sorts of little words does that.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I suppose we have not heard the member’s evidence but if he says the word “name” as opposed to “names”, which is what he actually meant—that is, the singular—are you saying that because there are more plurals than singular, you went with the plural rather than the other way around?

**Ms Corey:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within two days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee’s consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you very much.

**Ms Corey:** Thank you very much.

**Hearing concluded at 10.33 am**