



Queensland Parliamentary Service

THE CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT

Parliament House Ph: +61 7 3553 6451
George Street Fax: +61 7 3553 6454
Brisbane Qld 4000
email: ClerksOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au
www.parliament.qld.gov.au

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

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Ms Di Farmer MP
Chair
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Farmer

I refer to the following interchange which occurred in the estimates examination on 18 August 2015 regarding staff in the office of the Speaker:

Mr SPRINGBORG: You can never be sure of what will happen in politics, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: No, we do not know what will happen in politics. Again, I do not know if I will get re-elected. But, assuming I get re-elected, it is unlikely that I will continue as the Speaker in the next government whoever forms that government. Again, I am thinking that I do not want to have to go down this road of more severance payments. If there are competent staff already employed in Parliamentary Service who would like to come and spend some time in my office working in the Speaker's office, I would be keen to take them on, and we have two great staff who are now working in my office.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Has that been an option that has been taken up or offered or advised to other Speakers or sought by other Speakers in the past about using long-term members of the Parliamentary Service?

Mr SPEAKER: I do not want to get into—

Mr SPRINGBORG: I was not asking—I am just asking the Clerk.

Mr Laurie: To the best of my recollection, it has never been asked, apart from short-term fill in, if you like. But most Speakers have wanted to bring in their own staff.

[Emphasis added]

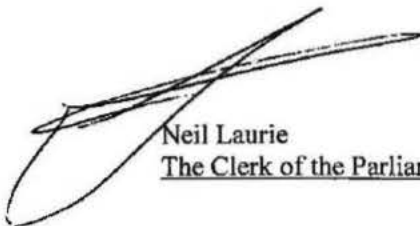
I need to correct my answer (emphasised) and provide additional information to the committee as follows:

- Corporate memory reveals that up until the election of Speaker Fouras in 1990, there had been a permanent officer in the Office who served a number of successive Speakers. This officer retired in about 1990. From this time on Speaker's appointed their own staff to their office. From about 1996, officers appointed in the office were generally placed on contract. This reflected the changing nature of the functions being performed in the office and the staff appointed to the office.
- Some permanent staff remained in or associated with the Speaker's Office until 2005/2006. For example, prior to about 2005/2006 function and room bookings were administered by a permanent parliamentary officer located within the Speaker's Office; however, when this function was transferred to Catering Services in 2005/2006 that officer was transferred on line to Catering Services. Similarly, there had been a parliamentary attendant known as the Speaker's

attendant who in the past was considered as being attached to the Speaker's office, but was a permanent Parliamentary staff member funded through Attendant Services. This officer retired in 2005 and was not replaced.

- From about 2006 to 2015 all staff in the Speaker's office were appointed by the Speaker, at a level nominated by the Speaker, on contract (the exception being temporary or short-term assistance).
- In the context of the above, my statement that "But most Speakers have wanted to bring in their own staff" is correct.
- However, in 2012 an officer at the A03 level (Executive Assistant) was seconded to Speaker's office for a short time until another officer (to be appointed on contract) was sourced. I have been reminded that the then Speaker had enquired about a longer term secondment for that officer and I was not in favour a longer-term secondment (as opposed to a contract appointment). I had not recalled that the former Speaker had asked for this longer-term secondment and I apologise for my failure to recall this instance at the hearing.
- The reasons for my not being in favour of such a secondment relates to my desire to avoid perceptions of party political partisanship and in this respect I make a number of observations.
 - Appointments within the Speaker's office have generally been perceived (by both staff and members) as an appointment within a political office (even though I readily concede it likely that some of these staff have in fact had no political membership or affiliation.)
 - The levels at which officers are appointed in the Speaker's Office have been at the discretion of the Speaker and have not been set after a job evaluation (JEMS process), unlike other positions in the Service.
 - Appointments to the Speaker's office are generally made outside of the Service's normal merit based appointment process and appointments are made on contract to reflect this fact and also acknowledge that appointments are akin to a personal services contract and terminated on each Speaker leaving office. (This means that the Service does not have to place within the Service staff that have been appointed outside our merit selection process.)
 - The longer term secondment of permanent officers run the risk of tainting the officer with "party political" perceptions of that person and it would be difficult to reassign that person back to where they had been sourced. Because they would not be on contract, this would leave the Service in a difficult position as regards that officer's future.
 - Staff in the Speaker's Office have generally changed with each Speaker, even if of the same political party. Despite being on contract it is sometimes difficult for these staff to comprehend why they cannot be found a position in the Service.
 - I have also not supported secondments to Ministerial offices for the reasons above.
- When the current Speaker was elected and he asked about seconding permanent officers to the Speaker's Office (and as a legislation officer), we had a frank discussion about the above issues. I also discussed the matter with my executive management team and my human resource manager. I took into account the roles that the current Speaker wanted these officers to perform and the level that they would be seconded. I came to the conclusion that the current Speaker being an independent member, not being part of a political party, was unique and this together with the roles to be performed sufficiently resolved many of the issues above. Predominantly, there was unlikely to be "tainting" of the officers with party political perceptions and I could easily move these officers back into their previous roles within the Service.

Yours sincerely



Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament