



BROADCAST OF PARLIAMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Members:

Mr S.D. Finn MP (Chairperson)
Mr C. Bombolas MP
Mr S.W. Copeland MP
Mr S.J. Hinchliffe MP
Ms K.J. Jones MP
Mr T.J. Nicholls MP
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PUBLIC HEARING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL 2008

Brisbane

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Committee met at 10.11 am

CHAIR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I declare this hearing of the Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee open. At the outset I advise that in relation to media coverage of the hearing the committee has resolved to allow television film coverage and photography during my introduction and during Mr Speaker's opening statement. This decision was in accordance with the established practice of estimates committees and previous select committees. So the media is in the room for those opening statements.

The Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee was appointed on 14 February 2008 with terms of reference of three points (a) examine the regimes and systems for the broadcast of parliament in other Australian jurisdictions, and in those parliaments in other jurisdictions that have their own cameras the use of the parliament's broadcasts by local media; (b) assess the Queensland parliament's broadcast system to (1) determine the quality of material to ensure it is sufficient for the television media's reporting purposes and (2) recommend any enhancements to the video broadcast coverage of parliament if necessary; and (c) consider and recommend any appropriate standing orders and guidelines in the event that the committee finds that the current video broadcast system does not meet and cannot reasonably be upgraded to meet present standards of coverage. The committee is required to report to the Legislative Assembly by 30 May 2008.

My name is Simon Finn. I am the chair of the committee. The other members of the committee here today are Mr Stuart Copeland, the deputy chair of the committee and the member for Cunningham; Mr Chris Bombolas, the member for Chatsworth; Ms Kate Jones, the member for Ashgrove; and Mr Stirling Hinchliffe, the member for Stafford. I note that Mrs Dolly Pratt is also a member of the committee. We understand that she is on her way to attend the hearing today. We have apologies from Mr Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield.

This hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath, but I remind all people appearing before the committee that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I should also advise that Hansard will be recording the proceedings and witnesses will be provided with a transcript of their evidence. There has also been a resolution of the committee this morning with regard to the publication of submissions. In relation to the publication of submissions, the committee has resolved that it will publish all witness submissions received by the committee following the conclusion of the public hearings.

REYNOLDS, Hon. Mike, Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Queensland

LAURIE, Mr Neil, Clerk of the Parliament, Legislative Assembly of Queensland

GAY, Mr Stephen, Executive Officer, Office of the Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Queensland

CHAIR: I welcome with us today Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mike Reynolds MP, Speaker of the Queensland Parliament; Mr Neil Laurie, the Clerk of the Parliament; and Mr Stephen Gay, the Executive Officer in the Office of the Speaker. Mr Speaker, at the outset I thank you for the comprehensive written submission that you have provided us and the extensive information, which the committee has found very useful. I would like to give you an opportunity to make some opening statements about your submission and then I will invite members of the committee to raise any issues that they would like to raise with you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman, and members of the select committee. First of all, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament stands and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state. I also want to say that I very much appreciate the opportunity to address the committee today. As committee members would be aware, I have made a comprehensive submission, to which the chair has just alluded, to this inquiry and I do not intend to repeat all of that in my opening remarks. For the benefit of both members and the public, I feel it is important to highlight a number of the major issues. I particularly wish to outline some of the milestones that have been reached during the journey the parliament has taken over the past 16 years towards self-broadcasting its proceedings.

At the outset, I would very much like to place on record my admiration for the excellent work that has been put in by so many people over the past 16 years to achieve the high-quality television and internet broadcast of proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. The parliament, of course, belongs to the people, is accountable to the people and is now able to be fully scrutinised by the people during every minute of every day of its proceedings through the use of broadcast technology. As the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly at the time this project came to fruition, I am naturally very proud of what is a major step towards democratic accountability, engagement and education in Queensland.

The concept of the installation of television cameras in the Legislative Assembly chamber and the subsequent broadcast of parliamentary proceedings came from the parliamentary media gallery in 1992. The media gallery called for a considerable capital funding allocation by the parliament to finance the installation of television cameras. Over the next four years the then Speaker, Jim Fouras, made overtures to the government to secure the necessary funding. In early 1996, in anticipation of funding being provided to the parliament, Speaker Fouras permitted the television networks to have two camera operators in the chamber on the understanding that these cameras would leave when parliament installed its own cameras and provided footage directly to the networks. I would bring to your attention the annexures that I have given in my submission which are not only the statement to the parliament at that time but also the correspondence between the Speaker and the then president of the media gallery.

A change of government coincided with the commencement of the temporary filming arrangements and the matter was not pursued further until 2001. The temporary arrangements remained in place during this period. In 2001 the Beattie government committed in its election pledges to the broadcast of parliament. Funding was allocated to the parliament to implement the audio broadcasting of proceedings, which commenced in 2003, and further funding was allocated in 2006 to install cameras in preparation for the televising of proceedings.

The installation of the cameras was project managed by a working group that included technical experts representing the networks. I also consulted the party leaders and representatives from all sides of the parliament after inheriting responsibility for the overall broadcast of parliament project when I became Speaker in October 2006. Throughout the implementation of this project I have worked with the media gallery, I believe in good faith, as we transitioned to the new system of broadcasting parliament. I do, however, acknowledge that the media gallery always indicated that its preference was to maintain the arrangements that were first introduced on a temporary basis in 1996.

Given the passage of time that has passed since those arrangements were first entered into and the changes to media gallery personnel in the interim, I understand why individual television reporters see the current situation as simply the status quo rather than a temporary arrangement. However, following substantial investment by the parliament, the permanent broadcasting equipment is now in place and, after numerous adjustments and trial periods, the time has now come to move to the permanent broadcasting arrangements.

When this issue received media coverage in February this year, I was disappointed that some outlets called it censorship. For the record and for the benefit of the committee, I fully reject any assertion or suggestion that the broadcast currently being provided to Queenslanders by independent Hansard staff is in any way censored. In fact, for the first time in the 148-year history of this parliament, we now see the full coverage of the Queensland parliament for every minute of every hour of every day. It has been going out as audio since 2003, but now of course we have the broadcast of film and video of every minute of every hour of every day.

I also believe that during February's media debate exaggerated emphasis was given to one remark made by myself under questioning from ABC Radio host Madonna King regarding disability issues. This reference, after it was brought up by the media, was purely ancillary but was focused on by numerous outlets as though it was a central issue. I assure you today once again that that was an ancillary issue that was brought up. It was never a central issue in my or my staff's determination to pursue what we are pursuing in terms of the broadcasting of parliament.

The broadcast of parliament project has been a very long-term agenda in Queensland that has always been intended to maximise and enhance coverage of parliamentary proceedings for all Queenslanders. There are now nine cameras installed in the Legislative Assembly chamber to capture and provide footage from a variety of angles. Currently the broadcast control room is staffed by Hansard personnel who, as I noted earlier, have been unfairly labelled as censors by members of the media gallery. I say today that I think each of the members of this committee would understand and respect the independence of our Hansard operators and that they operate in the House on a daily basis in a very bipartisan way. I think the attention the media has given has been very unfair to our independent Hansard personnel.

Whilst I continue to reject that label on behalf of the Hansard camera operators, I reiterate the invitation included in my submission to the committee that the networks provide their own staff to operate the nine cameras installed in the Legislative Assembly chamber. If the networks choose to provide camera operators to undertake the filming and broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, there can be no suggestion whatsoever of any censorship by the Parliamentary Service. The footage that will now be captured by nine cameras installed in strategic positions throughout the chamber instead of the two cameras mounted on tripods to the left and right of the Speaker's chair will be far superior to anything previously broadcast.

Mr Chairman and members of the committee, I wish you all the very best in your deliberations. I look forward to your report to parliament. I am now willing to discuss or be questioned on any matter that pertains to the submission that I have made.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for those opening remarks. In accordance with the resolution of the committee regarding the electronic recording of these proceedings, I would now like to ask that the recording of the proceedings come to an end so that members can ask questions of Mr Speaker in detail. Thank you.

Thank you for that, Mr Speaker. I would ask you to expand on one area of your submission. I refer to page 4 of your submission. This is in relation to attempts that have been made to elicit from the media their concerns with the parliament's broadcast system. In your submission you indicate that on 15 January 2008 the Clerk wrote to the president of the media gallery expressly inviting detailed feedback on the quality and sufficiency of the parliament's broadcast. In your submission you indicated that no meaningful response was received to that letter. You go on to state that—

... they simply wanted to argue with me that their cameras should not be removed.

I am wondering if you could expand on this a little and outline for the benefit of the committee the arguments that the media placed before you and perhaps your response to those arguments.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. The letter that you referred to was written by the Clerk under my instruction to the media gallery, trying to elicit from the media gallery the concerns they had with regard to the trial that had occurred for four months of last year and indeed to ask them about extra facilities and the concerns they had with regard to the actual capture of the parliamentary proceedings. I was very concerned and that is why the Clerk formally wrote to them. We had been asking for that all through the trial last year as well and we were receiving nothing from the media other than the fact that they opposed the removal of the television cameras from the chamber itself.

After the letter was sent, I believe on 15 January last year, we did receive a reply from Spencer Jolly, the President of the Media Gallery, taking into account some areas that they had indicated were beneficial to them. It was at that particular time in early February that we had a meeting with them to say, 'We really aren't getting from you what your concerns are.' They always went back to, 'Our concerns are simply that you are taking the cameras out.' I indicated to them that this was a temporary arrangement, as I said, on file in a letter to the then president of the media gallery and also in a statement made by Speaker Fouras, the Speaker of the parliament at that time.

After I made the final determination, you might remember that a media campaign started with regard to that final determination. I said to them, 'If you're not going to give us any feedback, this is what is going to happen.' The following week I contacted Spencer Jolly, the President of the Media Gallery, and said, 'We have an independent expert who has been a director and producer, Geoff Cox. He has many years of experience.' He was well known to the media gallery. I said, 'I would really like you to talk with Geoff Cox. Let's bring him in to the operating room to try to work out exactly what you want out of the broadcast.' We did that. We got nothing in writing, but indeed as we started to work through that—and the Clerk might want to comment as well—we looked at areas such as the actual shot that could be taken when a person had the call as to whether it was too narrow or whether it should be wider. With Geoff Cox there we came to an agreement about the type of capture that was required at that particular time.

We also talked to them about reaction shots, which we had not included in the package, because they said, 'Really, at the end of the day we want reaction shots.' We put other cameras in. Three more cameras were installed in the Legislative Assembly. In question time, for example, if the Leader of the Opposition was asking a question, one feed would be on the Leader of the Opposition—or any other member of the parliament asking the question—and the other feed would be on the reaction of the government while that question was being asked. Indeed, when the minister was answering the question, the second feed would be on the opposition to broadly see the reaction of the opposition.

What we did put in place were enhancements that the media were actually asking us for. Unfortunately, rather than them continuing to work with us, they decided to escalate their media campaign in that particular way. Our major concern was that we were getting nothing in terms of a productive critique of what we were doing. We then spent some time with them in that second week working with them in a fairly collaborative way with regard to the extra facilities that could be given.

Mr Laurie: Before the actual stream went live before switch-on date in June, I think in the appendices that were provided there is information on meetings with the media about two matters: the removal of the cameras and the new system, and another one about some shots that had been taken previously. In fairness to the media, I think the two things that they told us anecdotally—not so much in formal writing or formal responses—was that the shots were too tight, and because we had one stream effectively there was no ability for cutaways. There had been some casual conversations to that extent, plus those earlier conversations in April 2007 or thereabouts. I was expecting, in response to the letter of 15 January, to have that response in writing and I suppose more particularised, especially in terms of what exactly the media wanted from our system. What we got instead was the media writing directly to the Speaker wanting to concentrate on the issue of the removal of the cameras.

The other thing is that we were aware from when the trial started in June through to February that the media, with one exception being the ABC, were not using our film despite the fact that it was available to them. We were unaware that there was an informal or formal boycott, per se. We did not become aware of that until the meeting in February.

CHAIR: How did you become aware of it?

Mr Laurie: It was during the course of the meeting between the Speaker, me, Jo Whitaker, who was the acting executive officer, and the TV gallery. I think the Speaker's submission explains it. Mr Speaker complimented the ABC on being the only one to have used the vision, and it was revealed at that time that the ABC really should not have used it because there was a boycott by the gallery.

Mr Speaker: That was completely new news to us. We thought we were negotiating in good faith with them and then we realised that there was a secret black ban that had been put in place.

CHAIR: So the intention of the trial period was to enable the media cameras to remain in the parliament and for the media to receive the broadcast feed and for them to use that period to work out the adequacy of the parliamentary broadcast.

Mr Speaker: Absolutely. It was really to allow the media to see the quality of the broadcast, to critique that if need be and to pursue whatever changes were required. In fact, that did not happen. There was no feedback whatsoever in the latter part of last year or earlier this year until the decision was finally made by me as Speaker to say that this is the conclusion of that process, that we had had a temporary arrangement all the way through and that we should now move to the next stage of taking the cameras out. Then when I made that decision they came to me to negotiate some changes. That should have been done a long time previously. In fact, we had only the one feed and we then put the second feed in to satisfy those very late concerns that were put to us by the media.

CHAIR: Thanks for that. There are some things I might come back to in terms of the procedures for working together with the media, but at this stage I might see if other members have questions.

Mr COPELAND: Following up on your opening statement, Mr Speaker, and certainly some of the information that has been provided in your submission and also in public comments that you made when this was the subject of some debate last month or the month before regarding complaints by members about the way in which coverage has been shown and the noncompliance with guidelines, could you expand on the sorts of complaints you have received from members and the frequency of them as well?

Mr Speaker: I have been Speaker now for about 18 months, and as the parliamentary sittings were held members from all sides of parliament generally would indicate to me a concern that they would have. That would be done quite often after a parliamentary session or during a parliamentary session. Sometimes they provided the Clerk with their comments as well. I got to know that many members of parliament knew the guidelines fairly well, particularly those who were concerned about the breaching of the guidelines. They came to me, for example, indicating that the cameras were on them without any permission for them to be on them—they did not have the call, they were not asking a question, they were not on their feet commenting. So throughout that time, member for Cunningham, we have had what I would describe as a pretty steady stream of complaints. Again, I will ask the Clerk, who also received those complaints. And Steve would receive complaints. They were not all directed to me. They would have been directed to my office through my executive officer and also to the Clerk.

Mr Laurie: I would normally receive complaints I suppose when I was at the table and Mr Speaker was not in the chair for some reason or was busy at the time. Members would come and make complaints, and sometimes the complaints were simply that they felt that the cameras were on them, if you understand what I mean. Whether or not the vision was actually being captured at the time and whether or not it was subsequently broadcast, that is a different matter. The complaints go not just to the TV cameras; they also go to the still photographers sometimes that appear to be taking photographs in there from time to time.

Members are very conscious of the rules. I suppose the rule that members carry around with them and that they know the most about is that they should have the call when they are being photographed or when they are the subject of filming. So they would say things to us. I can never recall anyone ever putting a written complaint through in all the time that I have been here. I can never recall a written complaint by members. But there certainly have been complaints. I would say most complaints would probably come after the news that night.

Mr COPELAND: So it has actually been on what has been broadcast rather than just the feeling that a camera was on them?

Mr Laurie: That is right, yes.

Mr Speaker: I think both.

Mr Laurie: A lot of the complaints that I get at the table are members drawing to my attention the fact that the media is taking these films and those sorts of things. I think a lot of the complaints that Mr Speaker and Speakers before him, from my knowledge, have received would be when the news is replayed that night and people are unhappy about what has been on the replay of the news. They have either rung the Speaker's office or saw the executive officer or the Speaker or even been in the dining room and, if you like, complained to the Speaker at that time. It is not something that we have kept a record of, I must say. I cannot show you a list of all the complaints that have been made. I am not able to give you an estimate. I would suggest that at least every sitting week on average there would be at least one complaint of some degree.

Mr COPELAND: How are they followed up with the media? I note in the transcript of the meeting you had with representatives of the media that some of them were quite surprised that there had been complaints and they had not been raised with them. What is the process for actually raising with them noncompliance with the guidelines, if they exist, or if there has been a complaint made so that they can be addressed?

Mr Speaker: Can I go back a moment to add something in answer to your previous question before I answer that. In my consultation in this area the former Leader of the Opposition and the former Leader of the Liberal Party shared the concerns that I had and expressed those concerns to the three of us in regard to the reporting that was actually taking place against the guidelines. If you look at the transcripts of me having meetings with members of the gallery, it is probably fair enough to say that I often thought that as Speaker I was actually at a press conference rather than a meeting to negotiate or to talk about the areas, because questions were being asked and you will see that the transcripts show the story.

I think the parliament would understand that, in terms of breaches, this is a difficult area to tab by the very process of the parliament and the busyness of the stakeholders. We have now brought in a system. Subsequent to this submission being made—in fact, before that—one of the things we have realised is that I think with any Speaker and the Parliamentary Service the actual breaches and the management of those breaches have been very difficult to pursue. Firstly, you sometimes do not see those breaches until you see the news services that night. You then need to have the Parliamentary Service staff be able to retrieve those and report those to the Speaker in terms of what the breaches may or may not have been. This is usually in the busy part of the start of parliament. In many ways that will then not be able to be examined until after the first session of parliament that next day. Then it is a matter of working with a busy media gallery as well about either tabbing those breaches and managing sanctions that may be applied. We have now adopted a system, for the first time, I believe, whereby I have a Parliamentary Service that is doing exactly what I have just been saying. But the earliest they can get that to me is some time in the first session of the parliament because we need to retrieve the film, look at it, get someone to independently look at the breaches and then report them to me.

Mr COPELAND: And then do you make contact with the journalist concerned?

Mr Speaker: We have not had a parliamentary session—

Mr COPELAND: But that is the intention.

Mr Speaker: I did put forward a proposal in the new media guidelines to the media gallery which was basically that members of parliament would not only verbally give me their complaint but also write to me with their complaint. That would then be investigated thoroughly in an independent way by the Parliamentary Service and a report given to me on whether there was an alleged breach occurring. I would then write to the media gallery saying that a breach had occurred. I would ask them for an answer, to give me feedback in terms of their thoughts, and then I would make a decision. This has never been done before.

I think it is fair enough to say—and I know that the president of the media gallery quite rightly has indicated in some of the material that has been given to you—that that managing has not been done. But I think if you look at the way we have tried to manage it in the past three meetings it is a hopeless process of arguing back and forth whether there in fact has been a breach. I do not think I am the first Speaker who has actually been in meetings like that. I think we have now brought in a system that can more accurately look at the breaches. I agree that if there are breaches occurring sanctions need to be applied, but I do not think over a number of years those sanctions have been applied.

This is a difficult area for the Speaker. The Speaker really does want to maintain, on behalf of the parliament, a good working and collaborative relationship with the media. Sometimes what the parliamentarians may feel is unfair and is a possible breach needs to be examined. But I think we need to look here at the reaction between politicians and the media and how we juggle and balance the requirements of both the media and the parliament. That can be a very difficult area to work within.

CHAIR: I do not want to labour this too much, and you have probably addressed what I am about to ask. Given the resolution of the committee you have not seen the submissions we have received, but I would like to read for you a section of a submission from the president of the media gallery. He said—

During discussions with several Speakers, we have stressed there are rules of television coverage and penalties agreed by the Gallery to punish any transgressions. These have never been invoked despite complaints from time to time from members and subsequent verbal warnings. We are prepared to consider any changes in this area.

One of the things that the committee is going to need to consider is the procedure for pursuing these complaints. I acknowledge that you have worked out a new procedure to date, but is it the case that the penalties that have been available over the years for transgressions have never been invoked?

Mr Speaker: I think it would be fair to say that there have been discussions from time to time between my executive officer and the president of the media gallery and indeed between different mediums, and that includes the print media. There have been occasions when I have written to the media indicating my concern about what I see as a breach. So that has actually occurred.

I think one of the major concerns we have here in my position as the Speaker and for the Parliamentary Service is that what we see as a breach is constantly argued and debated with the media gallery on whether they perceive it as a breach. We quite clearly see it as a breach so we have been trying to work this through with them, and not in terms of a heavy hand of sanctions coming down.

I think you can see it from this transcript of the meeting on 11 April 2007, where we went through issue by issue by issue. One of the concerns is that sometimes when you are looking at these issues, even if it is a week before and you have not seen the whole filming of the parliament which the media has done, it is extremely difficult to remember the actual incidents that may or may not have occurred. Indeed, there is often debate between ourselves and the media in terms of, 'That's just a broad shot of the parliament.' I

have seen the media and you would have seen the media take and use on television two members behind the benches having a conversation. How could that possibly not be a breach, but it is argued by the media that it is not a breach. So this is a very difficult area.

If the television cameras were to stay, the only way that could be managed is in the way that I proposed before—that a decision is made. The discussions become I think almost like a media conference and that is a very difficult way to proceed.

Mr Laurie: I just want to take you back to the transcript of 11 April. I do not think we provided you with the disc of the actual footage, but I think it would be instructive for the committee to actually look at the disc of the footage that we were referring to on 11 April. There were clear shots that were clearly not within the guidelines, but some members of the gallery wanted to argue that they were within the guidelines. The one about the two members having a conversation was clearly one of those. There were two members having a conversation and they were the focus of the shot and it was clear that they were the focus of the shot. Anyone who could lip-read could actually see what they were saying. On any construction of the guidelines, that was just impermissible yet members of the gallery would argue that it was a wide shot or whatever.

It is the same with reaction shots, as Mr Speaker was saying. You could see a member sitting there in the chamber and there is a television shot of them. Unless you have the full continuous footage, you do not know whether that is a reaction shot or not. It could have been taken at any time of the day or in fact the day before. You would not know unless they were wearing a different tie. Sometimes it is very difficult even for us when viewing individual news programs to know what is a reaction shot and what is not. It could have been taken at any time; it is just the way it is edited.

Can I just make one other point which goes a little bit back. That is, there are two issues here. One is the way the cameras operate in the chamber and the other is the way the footage is used afterwards. I have got no truck with the camera operators per se, but the bottom line is that the camera operators operate at the instruction of the journalists. I have had instances in there where they have been clearly doing things beyond the guidelines. I will give you an example.

One example I remember clearly is that there was a disturbance in the gallery, a protest. Under the guidelines, they are not supposed to be filming those and there is a very good rationale for that. That is, if you film protests in the gallery and put them to air, it only encourages further protests. There was a protest in the gallery—and this is going back some time now—and I went up to the cameras and I said, 'You're not supposed to be taking that. Desist from doing it.' They ignored me. The reason for that is that they are going to get in a lot more trouble from their media representatives than they are from us. Indeed I have seen a cameraman get in trouble when they have done things that the journalists clearly do not want them to do or vice versa. There was an evacuation a few years ago and I remember seeing a journalist berating the cameraman for evacuating when they should have been filming.

Mr Speaker: I would concur with what the Clerk has said because where I sit you can actually see it occurring. In fact those cameras are very close to members of the opposition and members of the government when they are actually filming. I would also indicate that, for example, when the members are being filmed, one can only say that that becomes part of the construction of a story. That is not a cutaway; that is sometimes used as part of the construction of a story by the journalist as well.

CHAIR: I think there are probably some issues in there we might come back to, but I know Mr Bombolas has been champing at the bit to ask some questions.

Mr BOMBOLAS: I want to move on to the enhancement, the feedback from the media and the changes but I will just ask a question on that. You brought up two clear instances there of breaches. Was any action taken? That is a clear indication to me that something should be done and we as a parliament have not done anything on either of those two.

Mr Speaker: The answer is yes, we have, but I will let the Clerk answer further.

Mr Laurie: To be very frank to the committee, I think it is very difficult to take the media on. You are all members of parliament; you cannot say it. I am not; I will. They exercise an awful lot of power. If a particular individual member makes a complaint and the media find out, they are not necessarily going to get good coverage for a little while as a method of punishment.

It is very difficult for the Speaker—not just this Speaker but all previous Speakers—to take on the media over an issue. The power of the media is quite immense in this situation. So I view with some scepticism the ability to ever be able to, if you like, implement rules that are going to be enforced because at the end of the day I do not necessarily think that members of parliament are going to stick their head up to ask for them to be enforced, and I think it is a very big call and a very big ask for the Speaker to do it too.

Mr Speaker: Indeed, in the transcripts that you have before you, you will actually see where a member of the television media gallery demanded to know which member was complaining. We indicated that it was not our business to identify that member and the question was, 'Why not? We want to know who is complaining.'

Mr BOMBOLAS: To us as a committee, that is good feedback as we set about investigating these matters. Let us move on to the enhancement to the system that you referred to in your submission and your address, Mr Speaker. You said initially that you did not get much feedback from the media then you

got some informal feedback along the way regarding cutaways, head shots, framing, all that sort of stuff. Were the media consulted about these enhancements before, during or after to get some feedback relevant to the enhancements to the system?

Mr Speaker: I think that is a good question. I will just reiterate that up until two weeks before the first sitting of parliament, when the decision was made by me and I informed the media gallery that the decision was to be put into effect, we actually talked to them about a range of different possible enhancements, but there was always an indication by them that they really opposed the television cameras going from the chamber. It was not until that determination was made by me, and there was a fair bit of media generated at that time, that we then succeeded—sometimes albeit in a reluctant way by the media gallery—in coming to the operational room, which they had not been to all the way through the trial, so we could work together.

Indeed, I extended that same opportunity to the Leader of the Opposition and his staff member, who came to the media room and put some areas of concern that were similar to the media. I then allowed a representative of the Premier's office to come to the operational room and to indicate what their concerns were and how we could work through them. In fact, up until that particular time, there was only one feed, so we then started to work with them and say, 'What do you want in terms of cutaways? How can we enhance the cutaways? How can we ensure that the frame you require for someone with the call is what you want?' In fact while we were there—and as you would know from your own experience with the media—we actually had the monitor on and we had each camera and we said, 'Does that look okay?' 'No.' 'What about this?'

We were actually doing it with the media gallery members, and their technical people were there as well. Geoff Cox was there as well. So that is when we started to get a pretty good rapport in saying, 'What about reaction shots?' We said, 'We haven't looked at reaction shots,' as the Western Australian parliament or the New South Wales parliament has not looked at that. We said that if they were really after reaction shots, I then directed the Clerk to go away and look at the cost of this, how to put it in, and we still had the parliamentary sitting coming up. We did that in record time. By the time the parliamentary sitting was on the following Tuesday, we had reaction shots, we had everything they were asking for at that particular time.

Ms JONES: Were they satisfied at that particular time with the quality of the images, the availability of cutaway shots and things like that?

Mr Speaker: It would be fair enough to say—and we find ourselves in this situation quite often as well—that given your main objective is for those cameras to stay there, if that is your intention, they are not going to be 100 per cent happy with anything because they want them to go. But in fact I believe that we did satisfy them. The president of the gallery and the representative from Channel 7, Patrick Condren, came up and looked and there was a satisfaction in terms of what we were able to give them at that particular time.

Mr Laurie: I think it is fair enough to say that the media have a line and the line is that nothing we provide is going to be as good as the vision that they provide for their purposes. In all honesty to this committee, for me to be able to say to you what is true and what is not—I cannot give that response. What I would say is that it is only when the end is nigh for the cameras in there that we will actually get I think fully cooperative feedback. If they work with us and say, 'Yes, we're satisfied,' then the rationale for not having their cameras is in there ends. So from their perspective it is a catch 22. If you work with us and get something that is satisfactory, there goes the argument for not having the cameras in there. The reason why the gallery, in my humble submission, did not reply to my letter of 15 January is that if they had detailed what the issues were and we were able to satisfy those issues then their argument would have been weakened in respect of the other issues. In informal conversations with various representatives at various times I got more feedback than through the formal process, and that is because I think the gallery is sticking together as a whole on the issue. I heard informally that cutaways were an issue, tightness of the shots and things of that nature.

Mr Speaker: I think it is fair enough to say that in our discussions collectively with Geoff Cox present, who is well known to the media gallery, he was saying to all of us, 'This is as good as you'll get. What the parliament is giving you is high-definition vision which you have not got yourself to actually take up.' We have in fact worked for the future. We have expended money to get that high-definition grab when the media here cannot really take that issue technologically.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In that context, Mr Speaker, I can see some concerns—and we have certainly seen this in submissions so far and the public commentary that has pre-existed this committee—about editorial control and use of the system with the cutaway capability that is built into the system now as a result of those enhancements that the service made. In that context I do want to draw attention to the statements in the last sentence of your submission. Those statements were reiterated this morning about your willingness to consider a way forward in terms of having media gallery operators operating the parliamentary system. I would not mind giving you an opportunity to expand on that and allow us to ask some further questions on that issue as well.

Mr Speaker: Sure. I think the most important outcome, not just for this committee but for the parliament and the media as a whole, is to have a good collaborative working relationship. I have no doubt whatsoever in the independence of Hansard operators, whether we are talking about the written *Hansard*

or whether we are talking about the process of monitoring and working through the feeds and having due diligence in regard to the media guidelines. That is something that we have done very independently. To some extent to be accused of that I think is very much not within the spirit of collaboration and cooperation because we know how much the Parliamentary Service in the Hansard area work independently of all of us.

I suppose my final sentence there is very much in the spirit of reconciliation. I am saying that if this is their major concern I would consider the media providing their own camera operators. They can be up in the operational room, with Hansard having a role to play there as well, using the parliament's cameras in accordance with the camera guidelines. I think, in effect, from our discussions with Geoff Cox, if we had collaboration and cooperation we could have our own staff very much working with the media gallery operators and their technical advisers to do this in exactly the way that all parties want. What we have not had is collaboration and cooperation. If it takes a change in the way that we are doing it, I am willing to see some good discussion held in that way. I think it is unfortunate that some of our operations are being tainted by these allegations, and I do not agree with them.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In that regard, Mr Speaker, I note the suggestion in your submission specifically that, if that were to be a way forward, it would involve the media providing those operators for the whole of the time of the parliament's operation. Now, I can see that that might be something they would balk at operationally, so I wonder whether you have considered the full range of options in relation to that issue.

Mr Speaker: I am going to ask the Clerk to, first of all, go back to where our idea came from, because it came from the Queensland Parliamentary Press Gallery submission itself at that particular time. We might talk about the practicalities of that as well.

Mr Laurie: When we went through the history of this, which is a lengthy history—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I know.

Mr Laurie: The committee has received a lot of appendices to demonstrate the history, but let me tell you that there is over a metre of files on all of these issues. I think this suggestion, after consultation with the Speaker, came about as a result of the 1992 report of the gallery itself. The gallery itself back in 1992 said, 'You provide the infrastructure; we'll provide the staff.'

Mr Speaker: That is on page 5 of their submission in 1992.

Mr Laurie: So it occurred to us that this was the way forward in order to combat this issue of censorship. Now, we would still have to have a Hansard operator there because, in the sense of responsibility, we are also broadcasting over the internet and I am responsible for that. So I would have to have somebody there to make sure that my interests are being served in terms of the proper broadcast being done.

Going back to the gallery's own suggestion in 1992, if censorship is an issue or operation is an issue—and, let us face it, they have two cameras on tripods at the moment and they are going to get nine fixed cameras. If we make whatever other enhancements are needed, they should get better shots than they have ever got before.

In terms of how long their operators are in there, I think this gets back to the point that Mr Speaker has been making or trying to make but it is being missed, and that is that at the moment the media cameras come in for two hours a day, generally. They might come for other occasions from time to time, but it is two hours a day whereas we sit on average over 11 hours a day. The view that Mr Speaker has put, which I concur with, is that while ever the media cameras are in there and they are taking their two hours of footage pretty well nothing else is ever going to get on to the news. That is the just the way that it will operate. So we are actually locking out nine hours of parliament. Similarly, applying that rationale, if it is good enough for the media to have their staff up there for two hours why should they not be up there all the time?

Mr Speaker: Can I table the document that I have been referring to—the Queensland Parliamentary Press Gallery submission of 1992. Specifically, I would like to allude to part of it, where under 'Funding' it states—

The proposed system for televising Parliament is not only of benefit to the Television Networks, but also to the Parliament itself and to the people.

...

The system would ... allow live Parliamentary broadcasts of important ... events such as the budget speech.

The television networks would be making a substantial ongoing financial contribution to the system by installing, maintaining and operating the equipment.

We propose that the up front capital cost be met by the Parliament.

We have met that. We have met over half a million dollars but the operating of the equipment was always indicated to be by the media or by the television channels. We actually came in here and said that we would operate the media in the same way as every other parliament in Australia, and indeed the world, has done—in an independent way by Hansard operators. What I am doing in my submission is saying that, if it comes to that, if there is such a concern about censorship here—which I do not believe is correct, but if that is what they understand and they portray, which is very damaging to what we are doing—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: So also if there is a perception that that is an issue?

Mr Speaker: And people's perceptions are their reality. So I am willing to go that step further and say, 'Come and operate them with our Hansard people.'

Can I further indicate that in my earlier comments today I indicated the temporary nature, which I think is an important matter to be considered by the committee. The press gallery have indicated that they did not ever see this as something temporary. Can I just refer to this, and I will table it. On Tuesday, 20 February 1996 the then Speaker Jim Fouras stated—

Order! Honourable members, today is an historic occasion in the Chamber as we begin to televise the proceedings of the House.

I will quote in part—

When the House resumes after the recess, cameras will be mounted below the galleries and will not be so intrusive.

That is clearly indicating the temporary nature of it. More importantly, on 27 March 1996 a letter to Mr Mike D'Arcy, President of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, from Jim Fouras, the then Speaker, states—

In light of the decision to televise the proceedings of the Parliament, I am keen to put in place an interim arrangement pending the installation of permanent cameras in the Legislative Assembly Chamber during the winter recess.

As I have illustrated in my submission to you, members of parliament had probably four or five notices from either me or the Clerk and/or statements made in the chamber that this is exactly what we were doing. So it came as some surprise to me right at the death when the decision was made and we were proceeding that suddenly some members were saying, 'We don't want this,' but no comment was ever made in that regard. This was always seen as an interim arrangement.

Ms JONES: Given the position that you have outlined this morning and in the submissions and what has been in the press by the media that their position is that they want the current arrangements to remain, I think it is worth us asking on the record what your view is in regards to any problems providing the adjunct broadcasting service which is happening right now. That is, if we keep the current arrangements, is the main problem the fact that the guidelines are not being met or abided by?

Mr Speaker: To answer the member for Ashgrove in regard to that question, it is a twofold matter. We have talked about the breaches, and there is a major concern in regard to breaches. There is an even greater concern as to how you manage it. I think what the Clerk has said, which I am not going to repeat today, are very cogent points. In terms of this mix we have today between politics and the media, managing these things is extraordinarily difficult. But most importantly, the major reason for the change is to ensure that we have the best quality service, not only on the internet but also by the television media themselves. If we allow the cameras to stay in there for two hours a day, that is the only time of 11 hours of parliament that the television media will report on. I do not think there have been many cases to go away from that. So what is concentrated on is the 9.30 to 11.30 session. The media often say to me, 'Why should you have the power to say to us what we should be reporting on?' We are not really saying that. We are really saying that there are 11 hours of parliamentary proceedings. There are matters of public importance. There are bills that are being debated. What we have here is a selective two hours only being filmed by the television stations and they will only use that. That is all they are willing to use.

I think that is the primary reason that I am giving today. There has been I think over this period of time, unfortunately, as I said before, a concentration on things like people with a disability. These were questions asked by the media of me. Why are you as the Speaker trying to stop members of parliament being filmed? This was really the issue that was taken up. In many ways that was good media. The real issues here are that we want the capacity for the media not only to look at those two hours but also to look at the 11 hours and ensure that all the people of Queensland, wherever they might be, in metropolitan Queensland, in regional Queensland—there is an amazing capacity here for the media not only to look after metropolitan Brisbane but also to work with their subsidiary networks in places like Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns or Mount Isa.

Ms JONES: Rockhampton.

Mr Speaker: Or Rockhampton, in regard to getting stories out to those areas. What we have at the moment is pretty much a metropolitan look at this without much examination of all the issues that happen in parliament in the other nine hours. I think it is a pretty lazy approach that the media has adopted in that regard.

CHAIR: We envisaged that this hearing would take approximately an hour. We are now a bit over time. The detail has brought up a few other issues. I know that Mr Copeland and Mr Hinchliffe still have some questions. We will continue on. If you have time constraints at any point just let us know.

Mr COPELAND: I would just like to go to some of the issues surrounding the quality of the broadcast that the parliament is able to provide. You have not seen it, but in the submission from Channel 7 they state—

Under the proposed system, the image is of the quality expected from consumer DV cam or high end security cameras. It lacks picture detail, colour saturation, and has a grainy finish. It is well below the broadcast standard required by free to air television news outlets. This downgrade in quality is even more concerning given the inevitable move to High Definition...

It goes on. Do you agree with that statement regarding the quality?

Mr Speaker: No, I do not. I think that statement made by Channel 7 is so important to your considerations that I believe you should get your own expert opinion on it. That is to the core of what the media have said from time to time. It was good enough for the ABC to use on *Stateline*. It came across as Brisbane

very good image at that time. That has never been put to me in that way by Channel 7 or any other television broadcaster. As I said before, we are really looking at a high-definition feed from the cameras through to the television stations here at Parliament House.

Ms JONES: Just to clarify, they raise in that letter, do they not, that the move to high definition could be a problem? You said in your earlier statements that we already provide high definition.

Mr Laurie: We provide high definition. We effectively have to dumb it down for their receptors because they broadcast in standard definition. I think the cameras they use are standard definition.

Mr Speaker: We had our own independent consultant, Geoff Cox, come in and evaluate all of these things and he had no doubt that the quality that we are able to offer is as good as, if not better than, the four television broadcasters have now. But I really would invite the committee to test that statement. We can give you what we are saying and what our independent consultant has actually indicated as well.

Mr Laurie: I was in the control room with Patrick Condren, who has made that submission, and Spencer Jolly, and I think Mr Speaker was there at the time as well. Patrick made a comment in the control room something like, 'Gee, how come I can't get this quality of picture in my control room?' He was looking at the display in the control room. The display in the control room is showing pure vision. There was some discussion between him and Spencer and I do not exactly understand it. It may well be that what Channel 7 is getting on their boxes over here is not as good a standard as what we are seeing over there.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Because it is standard definition, not high definition?

Mr Laurie: I think it is two things. The equipment that they have over here might be showing it as grainy. In terms of broadcasting it, it should not be an issue. The ABC story shown with it on the TV was certainly of really good quality.

Mr Speaker: It is their receptors; it is their equipment. They are the sorts of things that they need to work on themselves. If there is a problem it may well be their own problem. Some of the equipment here has been described to me by the people themselves as pretty archaic.

Mr COPELAND: The second issue comes out of the submission from the president of the press gallery. It says—

The chamber is high-sided with a narrow width. Side shots from the fixed cameras are therefore shot above members heads. The front on wide shots looking towards the chair are also high up and constrained by the width.

Are the angles of those cameras an issue that has been raised with you?

Mr Speaker: Not that I am aware of—not in my time as the Speaker.

Mr Laurie: There was certainly an issue about the tightness of the shots. Members may or may not recall that when we first started the broadcast we were running fairly tight head and shoulder shots. After consultation with Geoff Cox and after viewing the Western Australian footage we loosened up the shots so we basically had a stomach to head shot and slightly wider which may capture some other members in the background. Geoff Cox's view was that the media would prefer to have a looser shot than a tight shot because the looser shots allow body actions and things of that nature to be filmed.

Mr Speaker: We did broaden it to allow that.

Mr Laurie: In terms of what the president of the gallery is saying there, I would suggest that the committee take that up with a film and television expert. Sometimes I think that there is a lot of mumbo jumbo given in order to confuse the issues. The bottom line is that the media have two tripod cameras stuck in one corner. What we are offering is nine cameras around the place.

Mr Speaker: I would also say that in the comments I made this morning, Mr Chairman and members, I did indicate that it is my belief that the footage that will now be captured by nine cameras installed in strategic positions throughout the chamber instead of by two cameras mounted on tripods to the left and right of the Speaker's chair will be far superior to anything else that has previously been broadcast. Their two cameras find it very difficult at times to get the capture that our nine cameras are going to get.

Mr Laurie: Geoffrey Cox, the expert—the committee is free to talk to him as well—thought that some of the shots that enable cutaways, particularly the cameras that we have installed at the rear of the chamber which look forward to the chamber so you get a wide vision of the front bench of the opposition and the front bench of the government and the Speaker's chair if you so wish, provide great action shots and much better cutaways than some of the cutaways currently used. They just cannot get those shots with the current cameras. There have been instances where the Speaker has given permission to the media for a third camera for special events because of the limitations on their current two cameras.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I want to come back to the point, Mr Speaker, around the issue of the management and operation and control of the cameras themselves. I take the point that you have made and the comments that the Clerk has made in relation to the 1992 submission from the press gallery and the issues around the Clerk's responsibilities for the broadcast that goes via the internet in terms of the management of the broadcast as a responsible record of the parliament and so forth.

I ask you to consider this and provide me with some very brief comments at this point. Have you considered, rather than having operators from the media operating the cameras and some person from Hansard ghosting that to make sure that it is meeting their requirements as well, constructing a third way, for want of a better phrase, which would be the supervision of the operators that includes input from both the Clerk and the gallery or something like that?

Mr Speaker: In our discussions in the week after we indicated that that was the Speaker's final decision we were very much talking about that with Geoff Cox and the channels themselves and saying that if there is any further training or if there is any other way we can do it let us collaborate. We have a few scenarios here. No. 1 is that our independent Hansard operators continue to do it. No. 2 is we have the TV station operators and our Hansard people involved. No. 3 is that we all get together and have a system that we are all going to be very happy with. I think that No. 3 is what we really wanted right from the start irrespective of who was going to operate it. Let us all be absolutely consistent in saying that we have a lot of faith in terms of those operations. That is what it comes down to.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: From the point of view of the media coverage, not to achieve that by blanding down the coverage but by making sure it is as dynamic and responsive to broadcast needs as possible.

Mr Speaker: Absolutely. We actually do not want to see some sort of dull picture of the parliament. As I said when I was first elected as Speaker, I actually wanted parliament to be as robust as possible. I think that by my very actions as the Speaker I have actually shown that I want robustness between the sides of the parliament and people having a fair say when the Speaker judges that it is not orderly. The cameras should be picking that up.

We should not in any way be trying to censor what is happening. We need to remember—and I repeat this for the third time today—that what is going out on the internet is every minute of every hour of every day. People can see exactly what is happening in their parliament for the first time in the 148-year history of this parliament. We want a robust parliament to be amply demonstrated to those who are watching it on TV. We are not trying to dumb this down in any way at all.

Mr Laurie: What I think was very good after the decision was made by Mr Speaker that the cameras were coming out—and for a period there was a bit of a fait accompli in the gallery—was that we were meeting with the president and a channel 7 representative up in the media room and talking about things like this. Everyone was sitting around and they were telling us what angle of shot they wanted and what width of shot they wanted. There was collaboration. Once the smoke surrounding the removal of the cameras is gone you will get that I think. It is a bit of a case of dying in the ditches on that issue first.

CHAIR: This has been a very informative hearing. It is becoming increasingly clear that there are some fairly broad issues for us to be looking at. In particular today we have talked about how we work through issues, rules and breaches. We may need to take some further advice on that as we proceed.

Can I thank you, Mr Speaker, for making yourself available today. I know the difficulties we had in trying to work through a schedule that suited all of us. We appreciate you taking the work of this committee seriously in terms of being present today with officers of the parliament and providing us with a comprehensive written submission. Thank you for that.

Mr Speaker: Can I just say in conclusion: thank you to the committee for giving us the hearing you have today. Thank you also for working with me with a difficult diary. I am taking some personal time off with family at the moment as well and you have been able to work around my commitments. Can I thank you very much in that regard. I look forward to your final deliberations and I wish you well.

Committee adjourned at 11.28 am



BROADCAST OF PARLIAMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Members:

Mr S.D. Finn MP (Chairperson)
Mr C. Bombolas MP
Mr S.W. Copeland MP
Mr S.J. Hinchliffe MP
Ms K.J. Jones MP
Mr T.J. Nicholls MP
Ms D.R. Pratt MP

PUBLIC HEARING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 8 APRIL 2008

Brisbane

TUESDAY, 8 APRIL 2008

Committee met at 10.01 am

CHAIR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I declare this hearing of the Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee open. In relation to media coverage of the hearing, the committee has resolved to allow television film coverage and photography during my opening statement and during witnesses' opening statements. Further, as this hearing room has a direct audio feed to media parliamentary offices, the committee has resolved that the media has access to the audio of today's hearing via the direct feed. Witnesses have previously been provided with a copy of the instructions for witnesses, so we will take those as read. I also advise that Hansard will record the proceedings and witnesses will be provided with a transcript of their evidence.

The Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee was appointed on 14 February 2008 to (a) examine the regimes and systems for the broadcast of parliament in other Australian jurisdictions, and in those parliaments in other jurisdictions that have their own cameras, the use of the parliament's broadcasts by local media; (b) assess the Queensland parliament's broadcast system to (1) determine the quality of material to ensure it is sufficient for the television media's reporting purposes; and (2) recommend any enhancements to the video broadcast coverage of parliament, if necessary; and (c) consider and recommend any appropriate standing orders and guidelines in the event that the committee finds that the current video broadcast system does not meet and cannot reasonably be upgraded to meet present standards of coverage. This committee is to report to the Legislative Assembly by 30 May 2008.

My name is Simon Finn and I am the chair of the committee. The other members of the committee here today are Mr Stuart Copeland, the member for Cunningham and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Chris Bombolas, the member for Chatsworth; Mr Stirling Hinchliffe, the member for Stafford; Ms Kate Jones, the member for Ashgrove; Mr Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield; and Mrs Dolly Pratt, the member for Nanango. This hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and is subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath, but I remind you that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

As we stated in our original correspondence to witnesses, it is the committee's intention to adhere to the scheduled times as published. I should note, however, at this stage that there is some change to the proceedings of the committee today. Mr Lee Anderson, the director of news at Channel 9, has advised that he will not be attending to give evidence to the committee. Mr Rob Raschke, the director of news at Channel 7, has also advised that he will not be attending the committee to provide evidence and that Mr Patrick Condren will attend in his place. We will be asking witnesses to make a succinct opening statement and then I will be inviting committee members to ask questions of witnesses. Our first witness today is Mr Spencer Jolly, the president of the Queensland parliament media gallery.

JOLLY, Mr Spencer Lindsay, President, Queensland Parliament Media Gallery

CHAIR: Mr Jolly, I invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed with questions.

Mr Jolly: Mr Chairman, thank you, and I wish to thank you and your committee for the opportunity to appear here on behalf of the television journalists who are permanently attached to the Queensland parliament media gallery. As I have stressed in my written submission, the proposed changes to how we cover parliament have been greeted with great alarm by us and our respective free-to-air broadcast organisations. That will become manifestly clear to you as you go through proceedings today. We have always applauded parliament's decision to webcast all proceedings. However, we fail to see why our two-camera news pool coverage from the debating floor must cease.

Much has been made of a 'trial'—and I put that in quotes—of television coverage when Speaker Fouras allowed news camera coverage in the chamber in February 1996. My recollection and that of the media gallery chairman at the time, Mike D'arcy, was that the trial was to ascertain whether coverage of proceedings was of benefit to the parliament and the television stations and whether the negotiated rules would be observed. Of prime importance stressed at the time was for the broadcast service to be implemented at no cost to the taxpayer. By way of assisting your deliberations and to clarify historical details, I seek your permission to table a letter from Mr D'arcy which followed the Speaker's observations made to the committee last Wednesday. Is that in order?

CHAIR: Yes, it is. We have that letter in front of us.

Mr Jolly: Thank you. I have another letter that I also seek to table from Mr Alex Smith whose submission for electronic coverage of parliament made in 1992 and on behalf of the then press gallery was also referred to by the Speaker. Is that in order?

CHAIR: That is in order as well.

Mr Jolly: Thank you. I have also provided a DVD for each committee member for the purpose of evaluating picture coverage. The DVD commences with pictures emanating from Canberra, which is what our current coverage has been modelled on. There is an edited story drawing on the same pictures from Canberra. This is followed by the various shot sizes and reaction shots our news camera cover provides and the segment is followed by two edited stories drawing on the two-camera feed. The final segment of the DVD contains a series of shots from parliament's fixed cameras and includes the only two reaction shots the Speaker agreed to permit. The DVD backs up our alarm that the rigid in-house fixed position cameras would result in serious strictures to what we currently record and broadcast and are skewed heavily in the government's and Mr Speaker's direction.

The nub of this issue boils down to production standards and broadcast values and what is allowed to be captured and screened under agreed rules. The proposed ban on our cameras will no longer allow a comprehensive outside broadcast style of cover and any loss of hard-won media access to a parliament is censorship. If we are forced to fall back on what parliament is streaming, it will be bland indeed and patently obvious to the viewing public that a sea change has been foisted on them when it comes to news coverage of the people's parliament in Queensland.

The Speaker has proposed that our cameras be allowed back on the floor for limited occasions. The guidelines to be observed for camera operators in these instances are nearly as restrictive as those in place at present for parliament's own cover—a clear acknowledgement, I submit, that the Speaker realises that the parliament's proposal to supply coverage will indeed curtail a wide variety of shots being available for daily news requirements.

A prime example from the current guidelines is that reaction shots of a member are permitted. Under the proposed guidelines draft of January 2008, reaction shots of a member are not permitted. This reinforces our claim of visual censorship. Any perusal by the committee comparing the current against the proposed set of guidelines will bear this out. There are penalties in place for breaches of the current rules of coverage. These have never been invoked, although there have been some verbal admonishments at times. I and my colleagues hope you will allow the status quo to continue in the public's best interests. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, very much, Mr Jolly, for those statements and indeed for your written submission and for the attention to the detail of this committee. With the conclusion of the witness's opening statement, that is the time for television broadcast of the committee to discontinue. Thank you.

Mr Jolly, I want to refer in the first instance to your written submission and the evidence that you have just given to the committee that the nub of the issue boils down to production standards and broadcast values, and that is at the core of the terms of reference of this committee. I am wondering if you can expand on that at all. For example, could you comment on what enhancements would need to be made to ensure that the in-house system would meet your production standards and broadcast values?

Mr Jolly: I will go back to my original submission and draw on that by way of answering you. Our present coverage mirrors Canberra's and that will become obvious to you when you see the DVD supplied. We take close-ups, mid shots, wide side shots—that is when a speaker is on their feet—and reaction shots of the Premier and the opposition leader if he or she is not asking the question. I have stressed in that submission—and if you could bear with me, please, while I find this—that the configuration of this state parliament is one of the great inhibitors to try to get your cameras in a position to even be able to achieve those shots for us, because the chamber is high sided and with a narrow width. So the side shots from the fixed cameras are therefore shot above the members' heads and the front-on wide shots looking towards the chair are always high up and constrained by the width. The one and only fixed reaction shot that the Speaker has agreed to for 12 opposition members and 12 government ministers to be supplied for our use if any member of the other side is on their feet is also inhibited, because it is at a great distance. So basically, I submit that it is the nature of the building, or the chamber, which is a serious inhibitor and that also your cameras are not at eyeball-to-eyeball level on the floor.

CHAIR: So when you mention production standards and broadcast values, you are primarily referring to the angle and placement of the cameras?

Mr Jolly: No, I am referring to what shots we can actually use, such as close-up, side shots, mid shots—a wide variety of shots—in order to illustrate the story that is being covered on that particular day. It is really about the sizing of shots and to get a smooth, flowing visual continuity of story.

Mr COPELAND: Mr Jolly, the Speaker, I think publicly and certainly in evidence to us, has stated that there was some sort of boycott against the use of the parliament-provided feed. Is that the case in your view, or is it just that the occurrence has not come up to use that footage?

Mr Jolly: Basically, when the Speaker put these cameras in place—I think it was about 12 months ago, in February—it was deemed by him and by us as a visual trial. We would assess what was being offered to us. It was never our intention to use any of that trial on air. We have strenuously objected to any hint of taking, or backing down to take, parliament's feed. So if you call that a boycott, there was a boycott in place, and I make no secret of that. It was a trial only at which stage we never got to do a picture comparison for either the Speaker or the Clerk when he tried to lower the boom in February of this year and insisted that we took these pictures, which we have always objected to. There was no visual comparison ever allowed to be made by us.

Mr COPELAND: If something happened outside the first two hours when your cameras were on the floor of parliament and it was captured by the parliament's cameras, would you think that you would use that footage then, because occasionally things blow up and something does happen? Do you think that you would use it in those circumstances?

Mr Jolly: Basically we have gone in when we have wanted set piece debates or ministers or opposition members have sought at 2.30 to correct the record or there has been a ministerial statement, in a very rare circumstance that that would arise, because we are monitoring parliament in our offices while we are here and you are here, basically. I have no great objection to that in a dire emergency where we would only need a talking head, but as far as relying on that to cover a story on what is on offer at the moment, no.

Mr COPELAND: Just with your Channel 9 hat on, I guess, how often would you provide footage of parliament for your regional affiliates, say WIN or whoever else, as they request? Is that something that happens regularly or is it ad hoc? Can you give us a guesstimate of how often?

Mr Jolly: Yes, I can quite happily do that for you. They actually get a stream from us of the first two hours of the morning. So that goes to WIN's central base or hub, if I can use that term to illustrate for you, in Rockhampton. That is distributed out to Cairns and as far as Toowoomba. On specific request, we then give them the reaction shots, which we do not stream out but we capture here on separate tape. And if there is an issue suddenly arising in the parliament which is germane to them the same applies, because we switch from the floor—we are not only recording it on our cameras; we are recording it in our central news control areas and it is going out north and west as well.

Mrs PRATT: With regard to the technical quality of the picture, how would you describe that, and if the technical quality is not up to scratch, how could that be addressed to meet the standard you want?

Mr Jolly: It is really not a technical matter. I suppose in loose terms it is a technical matter. We are talking about shot selection and who controls the shots that are made available to us, but it is all about shot sizes. I go back to the guidelines that are in existence at the moment: reaction shots of members are permitted. Under the new guidelines no reaction shots of members will be permitted. So it is not really an argument about colour quality or sound quality, although there would be a need for some improvement there—as you will see on the DVD—by way of probably lighting.

But I just go back to the codified rules that are in existence at the moment, and these were codified, from my memory, when Tony McGrady took over as Speaker. Reaction shots of a member are permitted, then it is codified, when the member has sought information which is being supplied by a member having the call; when the member is referred to in debate at the time they are being referred to; and if the member is in their designated seat. That is in order. So we can refer to whoever is being talked about or has sought the information or is objecting to what is being said by way of reply et cetera. That is why we need those reaction shots. Those reaction shots can be side on, they can be front on, within the limits of the two-camera coverage. At the moment there are no reaction shots permitted other than this shot, which is an abomination of 12 ministers and 12 opposition members and the focal length of that, if I can use the technical term, makes them look like a lot of ants walking around.

Mrs PRATT: In saying that, I noticed in Mr Speaker's submission he said it could be looked at that the media itself have control of the cameras in the broadcast room. Would that resolve the issue for you?

Mr Jolly: No. Basically that is a furphy. Our camera operators, if I can just boil it down very simply, are manual operators. They make instantaneous decisions. The joystick that is provided up there in a very limited booth cannot react as quick as a cameraman. Also that is a production type job, it is a vision switchers job, it is not a cameraman's job. On the constraints—and I go back to the constraints of where the cameras have to be sited here because of the high-sided walls and the narrow width—we can never get the shots that we currently are able to utilise by being restricted to that. So, no, it is not. And this assertion that in 1992 Mr Smith proposed this, that the televisions would operate their own system on behalf of the parliament, it is half right. At the time we were trying any measure to get visual coverage for television in here, but at no stage did we cede control to the parliament to tell us what pictures could be taken. In fact, at the time, various submissions to the then Speakers were that we would possibly subsidise the operation, we would help with the installation, but there was a lot of discussion around whether parliament would, in fact, pay the channels to provide the pictures or the channels would pay an independent production company, as would the parliament, to provide those pictures. There were a lot of ideas floating around, and they are just ideas.

Mrs PRATT: With regard to that, in your opinion there is no position that the parliamentary cameras could be placed in that would be suitable for your purposes?

Mr Jolly: Not on what we provide at the moment. I think when you see the DVD you will understand that. We cannot get mid side shots of opposition members and government ministers, we cannot get back-on shots of them. No way would the cameras be able to be put in a position to mirror our present coverage under the present rules that are permitted and that, I think, is another part of this argument whereby the rules are being changed to actually suit your cameras. Because the Speaker knows the limitations of those cameras and therefore these draft guidelines—I call them rules—are designed basically to force us to—that's it, we can accept, because under those rules your cameras can't provide that coverage. Under our present rules, which had been negotiated over a long period of time, they cannot mirror it.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In relation to those rules that apply to the gallery pool cameras at the moment, they are the ones that were proposed back in 1996, in essence, with some changes since.

Mr Jolly: There have been a lot of modifications to those. I have not got the originals here. What I have got is what is currently referred to as the McGrady rules. But I think the committee could source the original rules. I do have a copy on file but in my office. I have not brought the originals because I only wanted to deal with what we are dealing with.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I understand. We, in fact, have a copy here in front of us. That copy refers to, as you mentioned earlier, what you have referred to as the McGrady rules, the reaction shots being permitted. That clearly mirrors, when we see the documentation from the Commonwealth parliament, the provisions and rules for the internal system that the Commonwealth use. In the federal parliament the guidelines are that reaction shots for a member are permitted (a) when a member has sought information which is being supplied by a senator/member having the call, or (b) when the member is referred to in debate. They are two elements. It is unsurprising where the wording has come from.

Mr Jolly: That's right.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In that context, if the in-house system were able to—and I take your point you feel that this would be a physical impossibility—but if it were able to overcome those strictures that prevent having the guidelines that would allow those sort of reaction shots and be able to capture those reaction shots, would you characterise the gallery's position as having less of a problem with the provision of an in-house system?

Mr Jolly: That is a difficult question because currently, as you know, it is a joystick operation up there. They are not as fast on their feet as a cameraman with a good set of eyes.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: With respect, Mr Jolly, it is a joystick operation in Canberra.

Mr Jolly: Yes, but a lot more sophisticated than currently provided here.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is my question. If it were a more sophisticated system would that meet your needs?

Mr Jolly: I really could not answer that fully for you until I were to actually see a trial of that in place because I just don't know how quick it would be. Currently what is happening is that, in the formatted coverage when each Speaker sits down, it cuts to a wide shot of your chamber, then it cuts to the Speaker, then it cuts back to a very, very high wide shot of whoever is on their feet—in other words, it is for the operator, I think, to work out who is up there and then they go in. But to get fast reaction shots at eye level one camera of the two is always on the questioner or whoever has sat down while whoever is getting up. I just don't think it would be instantaneous enough, if I could use that word, but that is something, if you insist on that course, we would have to look at and try to evaluate it. But I am not a technical expert to that extent here today to say that that would overcome it.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In my next question I want to come to an issue that was brought to our attention in the evidence given by the Speaker and the Clerk where specific instances were referred to in which disturbances in the gallery were shot by the pool cameras—as you appreciate, that is clearly in contravention of the current rules—and that on those occasions officers of the parliament sought to remind the camera operators of the guidelines and the camera operator's reply at the time was, 'I'm not going to stop shooting anything until my journalist tells me to stop shooting it. I would get in trouble if I didn't shoot it.' I ask you, with your hat on as the president of the gallery, to respond to that challenge of the gallery effectively failing to meet its obligations and how those things should and could play out.

Mr Jolly: I will give you an answer to that but then I might ask for a specific. Basically, the rules are that we can record goings-on in the gallery if, in fact, I think from memory, the Speaker refers to them or if we ask permission at a later time on that day if we intend to screen any of that coverage. But more importantly, the gallery television journalists are basically the arbiters of what is selected and what goes to air because these are not live transmissions. While you may get an operator there who is standing his ground, and I understand that and I know there have been occasions and I do accept that, we are the ones that say, 'No, that is in contravention of the rules', and it just doesn't see the light of day. Basically, when we come to do the shot selection prior to the editing process, that is the failsafe there.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is the process in terms of any number of other shots that might be captured by the operators that would be outside the purview of the rules?

Mr Jolly: Some of our cameramen come in here and I know they have taken shots of documents—not that you can actually see the wording. I must stress that, because our focal length is just not good enough to do that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It sounds like you have checked.

Mr Jolly: I did have a look just to see if it was possible actually, but not for use, of course.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Of course, Mr Jolly.

Mr Jolly: Yes, basically we weed that out. It is not meant to be seen. I know PCs have been an issue. In fact, it is even harder on our focal length because of the PC's screen colour versus our—this gets very technical, but we cannot zoom in there; it just all goes to mush. So the one PC that has been

regularly—when you get, say, a new cameraman in there, which is rare because most of them have got the experience; we don't try to bring the untrained ones down too often and we always have a senior cameraman from one channel if there is a new operator from another channel on the pool basically just to help him set up and sort of go over a few shot sizes and so on with that person. Just going back to it, Mr English's screen is pretty close to that camera there and that has featured in—they get a bit bored sometimes and they will do a cutaway over his shoulder, but I don't think you have ever seen that go to air—I would certainly hope not. Also, you cannot zero in on the information that is on the screen to a usable extent or anything that we could operate off.

Ms JONES: Mr Jolly, in the evidence we have received from the Speaker and the Clerk and in your own submission there seems to me to be a real problem in the enforcement of any of the rules of the parliament. I will quote one of your paragraphs—

During discussions with several speakers we have stressed there are rules of television coverage and penalties agreed by the gallery to punish any transgressions. This has never been invoked despite complaints from time to time from members and subsequent verbal warnings.

You speak on behalf of the press gallery and say 'we are prepared to consider any changes in this area'. In your conversations with your colleagues, what kinds of changes would they be prepared to look at?

Mr Jolly: Kate, we have never discussed it to that extent but basically what we are talking about, I think, is that it is really up to the Speaker or the parliament or this committee, for instance, to advise the Speaker on what penalties you would see being implied. What we would like is for them to be codified and a proper pathway, if I could use that term, set in place for handling those matters and who would invoke the discipline.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Indeed on that point and to follow up that question, Mr Jolly, a concern has been expressed to the committee that one of the great challenges with having an operating system of guidelines, rules and sanctions is that politicians are loath to be the ones to initiate a sanction against a media organisation when they may be seeking to ensure they have fair and accurate coverage of their activities into the future. I wonder how the gallery would consider maybe an independent actor within the polity having a role in such matters.

Mr Jolly: We would welcome that. I do point out that you have a privileges committee. Maybe some members of the privileges committee and an independent arbiter would be willing, on a 12-month basis, to hear cases or whatever and impose the sanctions, whatever you suggest. I do accept what you are saying in that it is difficult. I think when I said if these were codified for flagrant transgressions—if I could use that term, by way of what you would codify as a flagrant transgression—these can be codified and therefore a disciplinary hearing could be instituted. The mechanism for that is really up to negotiation and suggestion. As I said, we are more than willing to look at those.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Spencer, just a quick question on that note. Do you agree that, even if we come up with codified regulations and a set number of guidelines and rules, it is a grey area to, firstly, detect and, secondly, enforce? Unless a member objects to certain coverage, it has to be proved that it was your coverage and was not from the parliamentary feed. Do you see the grey area in all of this and that it is difficult to police?

Mr Jolly: I can, but I think it goes back to the CMC, doesn't it—vexatious complaints will not be entertained and investigated. That could be a self-balance or a check there on it not just being a case of a member's nose being out of joint for something or other. Basically, as I said to Kate, it would have to be codified for a flagrant breach. I am sure examples would come to mind or the committee could suggest examples that would constitute a serious breach, a flagrant breach or whatever. As I have tried to say earlier, this argument is a bit multifaceted. It is not only about cameras but it is also about what those cameras can shoot. The rules are pretty clear. They can probably be refined and made clearer.

There was an argument or a discussion with the Speaker last year when we had meetings with him. We were shooting members going out of their seat and coming into their seat. I said, 'We agreed with McGrady that we would be allowed to capture four steps—one, two, three, four and then they sit down and one, two, three, four after they get up.' As was pointed out to me by, I think, the Clerk, that is not in the rules. I said, 'I thought it was,' but that arose after there was concern. It was obviously a gentlemen's agreement, a convention that the gallery had accepted that they would observe.

I think if we establish the rules clearly—and I do not think once they have had 24 hours to think about it or overnight members would make vexatious complaints—we would be more than willing to give a disciplinary system a fair trial. Basically, we are in parliament's hands anyway, but as I said we would be prepared to negotiate all of that. I think your idea of an independent arbiter from, say, a professor of journalism or a legal mind—whatever you want to suggest—is probably a very good idea. I am sure that more than a number of those personages would be willing to take that on.

The other thing is that you would have to deal with those complaints pretty quickly. We would not want it to drag on. Within a week or two there must be a hearing and the member complaining advised and also the gallery journalist advised. Whether or not you would consider quasi-legal representation there, I do not know whether we need to go that far. It may be something we would have to look at because under the penalties that currently exist we can have our coverage cut for a day or a week, as I think it says there. I have not refreshed my mind that far back. That is pretty serious to us and we would have to observe it.

Ms JONES: Mr Jolly, do you think that the press gallery in Queensland would be comfortable with having the same rules that apply in the federal parliament with regard to coverage?

Mr Jolly: I am not familiar currently with the rules. I would suggest that we have negotiated these existing rules. One of the contentious issues is this reaction shot of a member, which Mr Hinchliffe did point out basically mirror Canberra. I cannot really answer you, Kate, because I have not seen the current rules. If they are basically similar to what we are working on here, and you might want to add something which would qualify coverage or intention of coverage, we would be prepared to have a look at that, yes. I cannot see any reason why we would not. The rules that we have hammered out over a long period I think satisfy fairness of coverage and adequacy of coverage. I would not like to see them modified too much. They could be added to.

CHAIR: In relation to what the current rules are, I have the guidelines for camera operators. I am not sure whether these remain in place.

Mr Jolly: Sorry, Simon, but which are these?

CHAIR: These are the 1996 guidelines for camera operators. No doubt there has been some amendment to them. These guidelines said that cameras should focus on members with the call and shots should be no closer than head and shoulders.

Mr Jolly: Do you have a paragraph number on that?

CHAIR: I have a document that was from Speaker Fouras to Mike D'Arcy. I am asking: do you believe that these things are still in place? For example, the original agreement in 1996 said wide angle shots of the chamber may be used during divisions and question time, sparing use of the wide angle shot may be used at other times, reaction shots of members are permitted when the member has sought information which is being supplied by a member having the call, when the member is referred to in debate and if the member is in the designated seat.

Mr Jolly: Yes, I have this list in front of me.

CHAIR: Is that consistent with what you understand to be the current rules?

Mr Jolly: Correct.

CHAIR: It says that in the event of unparliamentary behaviour or disturbance by strangers in the gallery the camera is to focus on the Chair or a slightly wider angle shot of the chamber which incorporates the Chair but which does not show the offending incident.

Mr Jolly: Yes, that is in there.

CHAIR: It says that no panning along the benches shall be permitted.

Mr Jolly: Sorry, is there a number?

CHAIR: It is No. 8 in these guidelines.

Mr Jolly: You have gone back. No, that is not in the current rules, the McGrady rules.

CHAIR: It says that no split-screen shots shall be permitted. Does that remain in the McGrady rules?

Mr Jolly: Yes.

CHAIR: No close-up shots of members' papers we have acknowledged. In this set of guidelines it says that instructions from the Speaker or the Speaker's delegate in relation to the operation of the sound and vision equipment in the Queensland parliament shall be observed.

Mr Jolly: Yes, that is the last one.

CHAIR: I wanted to clarify that those guidelines were in place. Is there anything additional in those McGrady rules that you have relating to the shots that can be taken in the chamber, or is that pretty much it?

Mr Jolly: Other than what I explained earlier with this business about shooting or capturing vision of a person—a minister, say, arriving and sitting down or getting out of their seat and going off. There was an agreement reached with McGrady which is not codified in here saying that we would only be allowed to transmit or screen four steps in either direction, from the getting-up position or to the sitting-down position. That is the only thing that is not covered in there or officially spelt out.

CHAIR: We now have from the Speaker the February 2008 draft guidelines, the new draft conditions for media access to the parliamentary precinct. Can you expand on what involvement media representatives have had in the drafting of these guidelines? In your role as president of the media gallery, how have you been involved in the drafting of these guidelines?

Mr Jolly: Minimal. The boom was lowered in February. This was sprung on us I think with about 72 hours notice. There was a vigorous exchange of letters and conversations, and we seem to flounder every time on 'reaction shots of a member are not permitted'. There was some ground given by him on this reaction shot of 12 opposition and 12 government ministers, but minimal—at best minimal I want to stress. At all times we objected to these rules and we objected to the boom being lowered on our cover, and he is very, very mindful of that.

CHAIR: It seems to me that the guidelines are fairly much the same as the McGrady rules, with the exception of the reaction shots.

Mr Jolly: I beg to differ. I would suggest that you spend a lot of time reading them. There are—how many do we have here—nine. You have 13, or 14 if you talk about the steps to and from the seat. No, I do not accept that.

CHAIR: The steps to and from the seats are not in any of the rules.

Mr Jolly: No, I said 13 here under the present rules and you have—

CHAIR: Could you draw my attention to what might not be in the current guidelines that are in the McGrady guidelines? Reaction shots are not permitted. We have established that. What else has disappeared from the McGrady guidelines in the draft presented by the Speaker in February 2008?

Mr Jolly: Wide-angle shots of the chamber may be used during divisions and question time; sparing use of the wide-angle shot maybe used at other times; no prolonged focus should be on particular members who do not have the call; conversations or interjections between members during divisions should not be recorded, broadcast or rebroadcast either with or without sound.

CHAIR: Sorry, but has that been included or not?

Mr Jolly: No, from my memory these are not included.

CHAIR: Are not in the current guidelines?

Mr Jolly: Yes. During divisions cameras are required to employ only wider group shots, tellers recording and the Speaker. Reaction shots of members are permitted; they are not permitted here, and then those reaction shots are codified. An exchange certainly is in, as is in the event of unparliamentary behaviour. What is not there is the no split screen shots and no close-up shots of members' papers shall be permitted. That is just on a cursory glance.

CHAIR: Okay.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have a couple of questions, Spencer, if you would not mind. Earlier Mr Copeland asked you about this so-called boycott. Can you give us a bit more of an explanation of why there was a boycott, why you did not try the system to see if it could produce stories that were suitable for TV? Why was there an agreement amongst all four stations not to use it? It has been alleged that when someone did use it they were reprimanded by other journalists for having done so.

Mr Jolly: I go back. Basically, it was agreed by the Speaker and the Clerk that it would be a visual assessment—a trial would be carried out by the channels. That trial was an assessment of the technical and visual elements that parliament was providing. We agreed to the trial on the basis that we objected to having this vision foisted on us anyway. I cannot stress that enough.

Mr NICHOLLS: Why did you not put it together—other than the technical and visual aspects—if I can put it this way, in the artistic sense in the way that you use your variety of shots to run a story?

Mr Jolly: We were not going to give any ground, and we still will not—quite simple.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is that why you also admonished the ABC when they did use it?

Mr Jolly: 'Admonish' is your term, not my term.

Mr NICHOLLS: The allegation has been made that there was some reprimand of some description. That did not occur or it did occur?

Mr Jolly: I do not think I would even put it as a reprimand. It was just pointed out to him basically had he forgotten the fact that that was a trial for internal use; there was not to be accepted any pictures for broadcast use. I just point out as well that we were being badgered by our northern bureaus, having been contacted by the Speaker's office on at least two occasions, to supply pictures from the web of him carrying out some activity in the parliament. I found that to be trying to drive a wedge and to get this trial on air by default, and I took exception to it.

Mr NICHOLLS: Can you elaborate on that? So the Speaker's office contacted—

Mr Jolly: My WIN bureau in Townsville and asked that vision be sent up which he knew we had not covered and it would only be covered by his webcast. He actually made a DVD available to me and asked me to send it north. I told him no. I understand other colleagues of mine were also approached in a similar fashion.

Ms JONES: Spencer, how is that in the best interests of the people of Townsville? Was what he was trying to provide not newsworthy?

Mr Jolly: Not really, in my opinion. Basically, if he had wanted that and they had wanted it covered, they could have contacted us and we would have covered it with our cameras. There was no preliminary advice of what he was going to do to my WIN office in Townsville. It was after the fact, and I felt that was a deliberate attempt to drive a wedge in.

Mrs PRATT: With regard to complaints that have allegedly been made by members of the House, have you, as the parliamentary press gallery, received complaints as such or have they come through the Speaker's office per se? How many have you heard about? How many has the Speaker's office spoken to you about? Would it be at least one every sitting or would it be one every two or three sittings? How many?

Mr Jolly: Over the years I would say there would be a handful of incidents about which I have been summoned to the Speaker's office.

Mrs PRATT: How many years?

Mr Jolly: Let us say over five years six—only a handful.

Mrs PRATT: So it averages out at one a year.

Mr Jolly: I would say no more than two a year. There was a flurry of about two or three in a six-month period, as I recall, with Mr McGrady. I was over there on two or three occasions, and he would ask me, as did Mr Hollis, to admonish the gallery member concerned and to point out the indiscretion, which I did.

Mrs PRATT: So you would be surprised that there would be at least one complaint every sitting or possibly one complaint every few sitting?

Mr Jolly: I would be surprised if they were officially lodged with the Speaker. I and my colleagues have been abraded by members individually about coverage, but it has never got to an official, 'Please come round and see me, Mr Jolly. This is what has happened and you will now go and admonish your colleague.' That does not happen. But I am aware that there are some interpretations of coverage that have distressed members from time to time which they have taken up with individual television reporters.

Mrs PRATT: With regard to the cameras on the floor versus cameras around the walls, would you expect members to be less aware that they are being monitored through the broadcast cameras rather than the ones on the floor? Would you be surprised if they were not aware they might be captured?

Mr Jolly: Sorry, could you repeat that? I think I know where you're coming from, but I want to give you a proper answer.

Mrs PRATT: Basically, the two media cameras are very visual. It would be expected that the members of the House would be very much aware of possibly being caught, but by having the nine cameras above them they would be less aware of them.

Mr Jolly: Yes, I guess.

Mrs PRATT: And more likely to do something that they would be embarrassed by.

Mr Jolly: That could be possible once you forget that they are there. As you say, we are a bit more observable. Yes, I think you are right there. That is a distinct possibility. The other thing is, by way of these two camera positions, when Speaker Fouras invited us in it was a bit of a piecemeal approach. We were not quite sure. As I remember, we had one camera on the floor at the end of the table where the mace was, and there was also another one upstairs. And what Jim was about on permanency—and I know we could go on and on about this. Basically, it was up to the members, after a trial of about the first week or two weeks, but then the Mundingburra election got in the way, as to where our cameras were to go. Basically, the members themselves said that those cameras should go where they are. Admittedly it is the best and only position for us, to tuck them in those corners, because we get eye level to eye level, we are on the floor and we can provide that wide variety of shots.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have two quick questions. Spencer, much has been made since the first discussions that were held with the press gallery about the location of the cameras and about the installation of the additional cameras. Were you consulted at any stage about the installation of the additional cameras and did you or the electronic press gallery offer any comment about those additional cameras being installed, or was it presented to you as a fait accompli: 'We will do this and this will fix your problem'?

Mr Jolly: No. We were consulted. I think I pointed out in my written submission that there is a gentleman called Craig Larsen, who has been here and has worked very closely with parliament staff since the inception of this coverage. Craig was consulted all the way through on behalf of the free-to-air networks. But, as I have said in that submission, he knew we were anti taking that webcast. Initially we thought the emphasis was on webcasting and then it suddenly switched to: 'It's going to be you as well.' But at all times Craig was labouring under no misapprehension about where we were.

What Craig was doing was assisting the parliament to provide a good technical and visual standard and also, if the boom was lowered on us and that was the only coverage we had, we had a duty to cover parliament with what pictures were supplied. So, therefore, we wanted to make sure that they were visually and technically broadcastable. But that is where we agree to differ on broadcast value and shot selections. But on the addition of cameras for the reaction shot, the Speaker and the Clerk took me up to their broadcast centre there and asked me what would be the bare minimum of reaction shot. As I said, I was there without prejudice and he knew very well—I said, 'I don't want any of your shots.' Then he lined up this shot with 12 people and said, 'I'm prepared to permit you that.' I said, 'Well, that's very good of you, but it is not satisfactory.'

Mr NICHOLLS: The ultimate last stand shots were what those cameras were installed for from your perspective. If you had no option other than to take that live feed, then you were at least trying to improve that feed that you would be compelled to take.

Mr Jolly: That is correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: If I can put it to you, is it your contention that the problem with the proposed system as installed by the parliament is the location of the cameras—they do not reflect or provide the right shot; that there is a lack of variety of shots that are available to you however you might describe them—wide and half wide and those sorts of things; and that in terms of putting together your news stories they are as much a creature of art and about artistic values as they are about technical and scientific production values. When I say 'artistic', I do not mean a picture hanging up in a museum—

Ms JONES: Newsworthiness.

Mr NICHOLLS: The story has to flow more smoothly than the feed you are getting from the parliament guys. Is that the nub of your contention about why you should be able to remain?

Mr Jolly: Mr Nicholls, I thank you. You have got it in one.

Mr COPELAND: Spencer, just following up on one of the earlier questions that Dorothy asked you regarding the quality of the picture that is provided, notwithstanding the angles and the variety of shots and all those sorts of things, in the submission on behalf of Channel 7 it stated, 'The images of the quality expected from a consumer DV cam or high-end security cameras—it lacks picture detail, colour saturation, has a grainy finish.' In your earlier answer you said that it is not so much a problem with the picture; it is more with those other factors. Would you agree with that statement from Channel 7?

Mr Jolly: We are getting now into a very technical area. This is an engineering area. I have noticed what has been pointed out there, but I would suggest—and I cannot speak for my Channel 7 colleagues—their engineer has had a look at it and that is what he or she has evaluated. I think I touched on that earlier with the parliament pictures. In my layman's language I said that maybe the lighting in there should be improved even just for the webcast. It is a bit dark compared to what we shoot. But basically I am not qualified to answer that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: A question that follows on from that and certainly does come into your purview as president of the media gallery is the question of the translation of the high-definition images that are provided through the parliamentary system. There has been some suggestion that has been put to us that perhaps it is the lower standard of equipment that the television stations have installed here at the parliamentary precinct which is lowering the quality of the images that potentially would be available for broadcast. Can you comment on that in any way?

Mr Jolly: Pretty simply, the pictures that I have supplied you are direct from what was recorded by parliament's own facilities, from parliament's coverage.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that. But then, in terms of how you would capture those and then transmit them to your station at Mount Coot-tha to then be further broadcast as part of television news, would that picture quality diminish?

Mr Jolly: No. I know what you are getting at here. It is what you call a dub. You have a one-off loss of resolution—I think Chris, isn't it?—that we used to talk about. A one-off loss of resolution is minimal, and that happens currently anyway. It is minimal. If you would like to explore this further, I would suggest—you do have until the end of May; I know it is not long—that you invite Mr Larsen to appear before you or invite Craig to make a written submission to you to clarify those points.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: With respect, Mr Jolly, we did actually invite the television stations to provide us with evidence to do with the terms of reference, and we have not particularly got that other than some comments about graininess and other things. We will pursue that.

Mr Jolly: I am trying to assist the committee, not have an argument here. I could have brought Mr Larsen over if I thought it was of value, but then I would have had to ask him to appear before you. Really, we are not arguing about picture quality. I think it is a one-off loss of resolution which is minimal.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That is useful information to have.

Ms JONES: Can I ask a question relating back to the rules, Spencer. Before we had a conversation about the rules proposed by the current Speaker versus McGrady's rules. Does the press gallery support the rules drafted by Speaker McGrady?

Mr Jolly: Yes, basically. I think they could be made more simple for clarity of both sides, if we want to entertain that. But, yes, and certainly rule 7 must stay.

Ms JONES: Further, is it your opinion that the press gallery—

Mr COPELAND: Sorry, which one is rule 7?

Mr Jolly: Rule 7 is that reaction shots of the member are to be permitted.

Ms JONES: Is it your opinion that the press gallery would be happy to work with the Speaker and the parliament? We have had very clear examples of breaches of the current rules and Speaker McGrady's rules. Is it your opinion that out of this process the press gallery would be happy to work with the Speaker to ensure that the rules of the parliament are enforced?

Mr Jolly: Yes. I have said that in the written submissions, but I will give you that again verbally. Yes, we would. What we would appreciate, though, is the committee making some recommendations in terms of codifying—and I think Mr Hinchliffe also raised this—how this discipline would be applied, the body that would apply the censures, if I can use that word, and how that body would be set up. I think what we would like to see is that mapped out at least: 'We advise the Speaker and the gallery to follow these guidelines in a negotiated outcome.' I would like guidance from the committee in that regard.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Spencer, along those lines, again with rule 7 and the cutaways or the reaction shots, working within the guidelines and perhaps adjusting them, have you or members of your media gallery, particularly television, had an added advantage that you can work with a preconceived idea of a story where you have a tip-off of a story and you can get your cameras to concentrate on a particular member, minister or whomever—and, again, I am suggesting within the guidelines—and that that would work better than fixed cameras and could be adjusted towards getting to that member? You have an idea of who perhaps or what may be the topical issue of the day?

Mr Jolly: Correct. Both sides, and including the Independents, from time to time would tip us off as to what question is going to be asked or what matter is going to be raised, and that applies across all sides. In answer to your question, yes, you know that exactly and you have spelt that out.

CHAIR: I have one final question. In your evidence in your written submission, in some of your evidence today and in the pages of the *Courier-Mail* it has been talked about the equivalence of the Queensland parliamentary broadcast system and the federal parliament's. If we were able to provide exactly the same technical service that is provided in the federal parliament, if we mirrored what they provide, would there be a need to continue to have cameras on the floor of the parliament?

Mr Jolly: With respect I do not think you can, because, as I have outlined earlier, the configurations of the building here—and Canberra was purpose built—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I do not think we are recommending to build a new building.

Mr Jolly: No, I know. That is the problem. That is what I am saying.

CHAIR: Assuming we could get equivalent angles with positioning of cameras et cetera and changes to lighting—I understand the building constraints but assuming we could do it—would there be a need to keep cameras on the floor of the parliament?

Mr Jolly: Then you would have to come back and tell me what the rules of coverage were, and unless they mirrored the McGrady rules exactly and we could mirror those shots I do not think we would be happy with that either.

CHAIR: So the matter is not getting it to the quality of Canberra. Once we achieve that and tick that box, we then come to boxes of the previous rules which relate to cameras being on the floor.

Mr Jolly: If I can explain—because I am not trying to be obstructionist here—the angles that Canberra provides are very similar to what we provide now. I do not think that can be achieved here because of the configurations of the debating chamber, and then we come to the rules and the guidelines. The guidelines that the Speaker has proposed basically throw out what Canberra provides anyway. That is what I am trying to say. So, in other words, unless those rules remain—the 13 points, with the addition of the 14th that I told you about that is not in there—provided you do all of that, I think we still have visual censorship.

Ms JONES: There is one quick issue that I have before we break. In all of the evidence we have heard today and that which we have heard previously there has been a real problem about the enforcement of the rules and in regard to that process. We have heard evidence from both sides of politics that politicians do not feel comfortable to make complaints against the media for fear of retribution. How would you perceive the media could work with either this committee or with the Speaker to ensure that, if the rules were enforced, that concern would be addressed?

Mr Jolly: I think basically as I have said, if you are going down that route or pathway, I am looking for guidance from the committee in your final report—to both me and to the Speaker on behalf of the parliament. We would then be duty-bound to negotiate an outcome on that. I think your concerns are overcome—and I think Mr Hinchliffe's suggestion is an admirable one—if you put somebody independent in there to head a group and maybe the members of the privileges committee, whether it be all members of that privileges committee. But if we are dealing with a punishment which would mean a loss of coverage for a day or a week or whatever, I think it possibly would be grave enough to have all members of the privileges committee there but with an independent arbiter in the chair. If it gets to that grave imposition—because this is where I have asked for you to recommend or to at least spell out how we codify that—maybe at that stage if he or she is facing, say, penalty No. 5, which is the hanging penalty, maybe at that point that member of the gallery is allowed to have legal representation at the hanging committee, if I could use that term.

CHAIR: There are no further questions from members of the committee. I thank you for your time. We have gone a bit over time—an hour appearing before this committee and an opportunity for us to have you on the other side of the table. We appreciate the time that you have given this committee and your ongoing attention to the details that relate to the broadcast of parliament and associated issues. I thank you for attending today and providing your evidence.

Mr Jolly: Mr Finn, thanks. Ladies and gentlemen, thanks very much. I just hope that we were able to shed a bit of light on this and take some heat out of it.

CHAIR: The committee will take a brief break and reconvene at 11.20.

Proceedings suspended from 11.08 am to 11.22 am

CHAIR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I declare this hearing reopened. In my opening statement this morning I made it clear that the committee had resolved to allow television film coverage and photography during my introduction and witness's opening statements and we determined that an audio feed would be provided to media parliamentary offices. Witnesses before the hearing have been previously provided with a copy of the instructions, so we will take those as read. I advise that Hansard will record the proceedings and witnesses will be provided with a transcript of their evidence.

The Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee was appointed on 14 February 2008 to (a) examine the regimes and systems for the broadcast of parliament in other Australian jurisdictions, and in those parliaments in other jurisdictions that have their own cameras, the use of the parliament's broadcasts by local media; (b) assess the Queensland parliament's broadcast system to (1) determine the quality of material to ensure it is sufficient for the television media's reporting purposes; and (2) recommend any enhancements to the video broadcast coverage of parliament, if necessary; and (c) consider and recommend any appropriate standing orders and guidelines in the event that the committee finds that the current video broadcast system does not meet and cannot reasonably be upgraded to meet present standards of coverage. The committee is to report to the Legislative Assembly by 30 May 2008.

My name is Simon Finn and I am the chair of the committee. The other committee members here today are Mr Stuart Copeland, the member for Cunningham and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Chris Bombolas, the member for Chatsworth; Mr Stirling Hinchliffe, the member for Stafford; Ms Kate Jones, the member for Ashgrove; Mr Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield; and Mrs Dolly Pratt, the member for Nanango. This hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath but I remind you that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. As stated in our original correspondence to you, it is the committee's intention to adhere to the scheduled terms and we therefore ask that witnesses make a succinct opening statement and the committee will then take the opportunity to ask questions of you.

BOWEN, Mr Bernard Mark, State Editor, ABC News Queensland

CHAIR: Our next witness is Mr Bernard Bowen, the State Editor of ABC News Queensland. Welcome to the committee. Thank you for agreeing to attend today. I will give you an opportunity to make a brief opening statement and then I will invite members of the committee to question you.

Mr Bowen: Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you and represent the ABC to discuss this important issue for all of us. ABC News believes the present system used to gather pictures and sound on the floor of the House for TV news stories in Queensland is equal to the best in Australia. We believe it has served everyone well: the media, the parliament and, more importantly—or most importantly—the public, our audience. We believe to change this system in line with the current proposal alone would be a backward step. The ABC has some serious concerns about the proposed changes as they stand and we are hoping a sensible compromise can be achieved. ABC News believes the media should be responsible for gathering its own information, including audio and visual material, and the concept of editorial control is fundamental to the way a free and independent media works in our society. The proposed change alone has implications for the freedom of an independent media to make decisions on how it covers the political process in this state.

Under the proposed system, the media would no longer be in control of the audiovisual material gathered in parliament. It would instead be the responsibility of parliamentary officers. We believe this raises the perception of censorship. In a more practical sense, the proposed system alone has the potential to severely compromise TV news coverage of state political matters and this is of great concern to the ABC as well as to the other networks which each have a profound responsibility to cover the political process and the way it works here in Queensland. As the man who was formerly known as 'Bomber' will tell you, if TV news stories do not have adequate pictures, they can fall over. Under the current proposal, coverage could be dull at best and incomprehensible. Stories may not even appear on the news if the quality of the pictures and the number of pictures are not there for the editor to cut up that minute and a half's report.

It is conventional in the news-gathering process for the reporter and the camera operator to work very closely together. The reporter who is doing the story tells the camera operator exactly what the story is about. Here at state parliament, the reporters tell the camera crew on the floor of the House what the story of the day is. That camera operator is attuned to that story and can react very quickly to it, not having to rely on the reporter standing next to him or her. A lot of what I am saying has probably been covered by Spencer and will be covered by the speakers who follow me, but we in the TV news business believe that the variety of shots offered by the proposed system alone is just inadequate for the standards required by television news programs. There will be fewer cutaways, shot selection would be limited and there are black spots in the chamber. As a result, shot variety would be severely limited. For example, the vision of some subjects of debates, if those people are backbenchers and they do not speak, will just not be there, and that has happened recently.

The current system has also been criticised for only covering question time, but this is when the vast majority of newsworthy issues are debated. When the gallery deem it appropriate to cover other debates or other things that happen in the House, they usually arrange this through the Speaker's office, and this has happened in the past. The current system has also not been abused. There are rules for the media and by Brisbane

and large these have been adhered to in the ABC's opinion. We are not questioning the quality of the material that would be provided by the proposed system in a technical sense or the integrity and skill of the people who are providing those pictures, but the fact remains that a key part of the media's freedom would be eroded under this system.

The ABC does recognise that the proposed system does have some benefits, like the broadcast of parliament over the internet and the quality of the vision, I have been led to believe, is quite good. The Speaker is to be congratulated on this. However, the proposed system by itself would compromise TV news coverage. So it is a good system for broadcasting parliament over the internet but not good enough for TV news.

To summarise, the ABC is very happy with the current system and considers the proposed changes of themselves regrettable. We hope a sensible compromise can be achieved to keep the system in Queensland the best in Australia. Ideally, that compromise could be a combination of both the present system and the system that has been proposed where news cameras are allowed on the floor of the House during question time and the new system with the fixed cameras is used to provide the wider coverage and continuous coverage of parliament over the internet. I am happy to take questions.

CHAIR: Great. Thank you very much, Mr Bowen. Firstly I want to come to your evidence regarding perceptions of censorship. The word 'censorship' has been used fairly frequently in the debate that has occurred in recent times over the broadcast of parliament. I am just wondering if you could expand for the committee's benefit a bit more on those perceptions of censorship. We now have a system where we have full coverage of parliament. It is providing a consistent and accurate recording of proceedings. It is widely available to the general public. I am just wondering how the issue of the removal of those cameras is in reality leading to censorship?

Mr Bowen: By the fact that the pictures that would be supplied to the media would be supplied by parliamentary officers.

CHAIR: Is that censorship or is that about media freedom to construct a news story?

Mr Bowen: It is probably about both.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In that regard, Mr Bowen, from the submission that was provided by Mr Cameron and followed up by your opening statements, the ABC's position would be effectively that coverage of the Commonwealth parliament is censored.

Mr Bowen: I am told by my colleagues in Canberra that they are not happy with that system either and they are also lobbying for a system which involves cameras provided by the networks covering question time on the floor of the House, and that is what we do now, and similar to the proposed compromise that I suggested earlier. We do have an issue with the way pictures are provided in Canberra as well.

Mr COPELAND: Speaking of that compromise, I understand that the ABC is the only station that has actually used footage provided by the parliamentary system in *Stateline*. It was obviously deemed of good enough quality to be used in that story and a session that wasn't captured by the cameras on the floor of the parliament.

Mr Bowen: Yes, and that is why it was used.

Mr COPELAND: Would you see that happening again outside of the first two hours that are currently covered? If something happened during the course of a day—obviously if it is announced, if it is a budget speech, then the gallery asks for the cameras to come back in, but occasionally there are things that happen completely out of the blue that no-one is aware of that may be newsworthy; you would still use the parliamentary-provided feed?

Mr Bowen: If it was judged to be genuinely newsworthy, certainly.

Mr COPELAND: Would it be possible to get a copy of that story of *Stateline* where you did use that footage?

Mr Bowen: Yes.

Mrs PRATT: Just a quick question. Can you tell me: was there any backlash from the media gallery or other stations with regard to you using parliamentary footage?

Mr Bowen: Not that I am aware of. The reporter who did that *Stateline* story tells me that he discussed the issue with his media gallery colleagues, but it was a discussion.

Mrs PRATT: A discussion only.

Mr Bowen: Yes.

Mrs PRATT: Could you tell me: was there, prior to the committee sitting and investigating today, any agreement by the electronic media to oppose collectively the broadcasting?

Mr Bowen: No, I am told there wasn't.

Mrs PRATT: No get together to say, 'Look, if we go at this as a united front we will win', that type of thing?

Mr Bowen: No.

Mrs PRATT: No coercion?

Mr Bowen: No, I am not aware of that.

Mr BOMBOLAS: You touched on it in your statement earlier today: it is about the variety of the pictures available, about the variety of shots particularly in a visual medium, and it is that complementary footage could lead to a story getting up and making the news and not making the news. That is what it could come down to, that if the pictures were boring, in inverted commas, that were supplied by the Parliamentary Service, that could make the difference between that story getting to air and not?

Mr Bowen: That's right.

Mr BOMBOLAS: As simple as that?

Mr Bowen: That's right, that story getting to air as a package, as we call it, or it might reduce a package to a reader voiceover which is a condensed version of the story. There is some statistical evidence in here about that variety of shots, the cutaways. There was one recent week where on three consecutive evenings our state political reporter used 33 cutaways, a variety of vision, whereas the proposed system offered by the parliament would have given him three cutaways.

Mr COPELAND: Was that 33 on each day or over the week?

Mr Bowen: No, a total of 33 over the three days of sittings.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are saying a story's newsworthiness for broadcast is determined by pictures you can get.

Mr Bowen: It can be.

Mr NICHOLLS: So the words themselves are irrelevant to you?

Mr Bowen: No, I am not saying that. If a story is deemed to be a must run, it will run in some form. However, if we do not have pictures from the day of the subject of a debate, for example, we will use file footage. It will make the story appear more bland and will not capture what happened on the day. I am not saying pictures alone rule whether a story gets up or not, but they are certainly an important factor in a television news story.

Mr NICHOLLS: You did say the quality of the pictures is inimical to the story getting a run.

Mr Bowen: I don't think I used those words. They are an important factor, but they are not the be-all and end-all.

Mr NICHOLLS: It came through very clearly in your reference to it that if you did not have pictures the story would not likely get a run.

Mr Bowen: A marginal story probably wouldn't, an important story would.

Mr NICHOLLS: An important story, even without your pictures but say with the pictures put through from the parliamentary system, would still get a run?

Mr Bowen: Wouldn't look as good, but it would still get a run. It might be there in a reduced form but it would still get a run.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: As indeed, I guess, a story that might be illustrated by very poor quality images from a mobile phone, for instance, would get a run?

Mr Bowen: Exactly, yes. That can add a dramatic effect as well. We are hoping the pictures supplied by state parliament are a bit better than mobile phone quality, as I am sure they are.

Mrs PRATT: But not as dramatic sometimes.

Ms JONES: I don't know what your position is on this, but in the evidence we have received both from the president of the press gallery, the Speaker and the Clerk there seems to be a real problem in the enforcement of the rules of the parliament with regard to television coverage. Who is responsible at the ABC to ensure that the ABC journalists meet the guidelines of the parliament?

Mr Bowen: That would be me.

Ms JONES: Have you ever been in a situation where you have been presented with those images?

Mr Bowen: No. I have been in my present news editor's position for just under a year but I was the television news producer before that so I would have known if that happened. The current state political reporter for the ABC informs me that he has never been approached informally or formally about a breach. His predecessor was called once—I don't know whether it was by the member or the Speaker's office—about a minor technical breach of a member walking on the floor of the House, which is a technical breach at best, but I have no problem with these rules being enforced at all.

Mrs PRATT: Just sticking to that point, you would be surprised if you were told that approximately one MP per sitting had made a complaint? You would be surprised?

Mr Bowen: I am here to tell you what I know from an ABC point of view.

Mrs PRATT: You haven't been approached, that is what I am saying.

Mr Bowen: No. I assumed that the guidelines were there for the media to follow and for the Speaker's office to ensure were followed and if there was any issue with it then they would be stamped out pretty quickly.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In the Speaker's submission and his appearance before the committee he stated that he would consider allowing the media to provide camera operators to use the parliament's cameras in accordance with the guidelines that he has put in place. I have an idea of what your comments might be on the basis of what you have said already, but could you elaborate on that?

Mr Bowen: It is an interesting proposal. It is unusual. A control room away from the floor of the House gives it a separation from what is happening. I don't know whether they are pushbutton or joystick controlled cameras but it is the flexibility of those cameras as well—there are nine cameras, I believe—and how quickly those cameras can be repositioned with zooms and pans. A camera operator on a tripod on the floor of the House who is in the arena can perceive what is happening and react very quickly to that, although I am not rejecting the Speaker's suggestion. It is probably worth looking at. I will mention also that it is probably worth considering for question time. I don't know what the other networks are like, but our resources probably wouldn't stretch to coverage for the duration of parliament.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: For 12 hours or more.

Mr Bowen: That's right. It might involve too much overtime.

Mrs PRATT: With regard to that, if the parliamentary broadcast system could be brought up to get the right angles and everything else required and the quality is not a problem—

Mr Bowen: That would be better, but still you are separating the ability of the cameras to capture what is happening. There is that reaction time which can be crucial and critical in television news gathering. The role of the camera operator is crucial in that. The cameraman who might be looking through the viewfinder can also hear what is happening and knows what direction to point the camera in very quickly. I see that as a bit of a stumbling block.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Quite often he would have been informed by the journalist of the story of the day and who the key players would be so that he would have an idea where this theatre would be moving to and from.

Mr Bowen: Exactly.

Ms JONES: Some of the evidence that we have been provided with is that members of parliament feel that they cannot complain about the coverage of them even if they feel that it was a clear breach of the rules. Trying to look at a solution as part of this process, would you suggest that the Speaker or whoever the person would be in charge of enforcing the rules of parliament, say the Clerk, go to the state editor of news as opposed to the journalist? Because that is a complaint we have received.

Mr Bowen: Probably the reporter, the gallery president and then the individual news editor. If it is a technical breach I have no issue with the Speaker's office or the individual member getting on the phone and talking to the TV reporter, but if it is more serious certainly the gallery president and the individual stations should be involved. As I said before, I have no problem with the guidelines or the rules being enforced. That is what they are there for.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: With respect, that is actually illogical from what you have said from the outset, that you think that any sort of controlled system that involves a managed broadcast is not as free and available as having cameras on the floor, so therefore one would think that guidelines for those cameras operating on the floor would be a restriction and a censorship.

Mr Bowen: I do not see them as a restriction. Certainly guidelines for camera operators on the floor of the House are probably more acceptable from an independent news-gathering point of view than a system with rigid cameras with limited technical ability, if I can put it that way.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In that context, you see it more as a function of the limitations of the system. So if the system providing the feed and providing images from the parliament had the same capabilities of what you have described with operators on the floor, then that would be satisfactory?

Mr Bowen: That would be satisfactory, but I cannot see how that can happen.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that point.

Mr Bowen: I have not seen the control room where the camera operators are under the proposed system, but it is not on the floor of the House so they are not in the cauldron.

CHAIR: Are there any further questions from the committee? Mr Bowen, thank you very much for attending the committee today. I would also pass on to the ABC the committee's thanks for its written submission, which I found to be one of the more detailed and informative submissions we have received from the networks. A couple of networks have determined not to come and meet with us, so we are very pleased that you came and gave evidence today.

I would like to ask one thing: if possible, could a disk be made available to the committee showing that week where there were the 33 different cutaways? That would be really helpful to us when determining the business of the committee and would also give strength to the written submission that we have received.

Mr Bowen: Sure, and the *Stateline* story as well?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Bowen: No problem. This is a very important issue for the ABC. Covering state politics or covering politics federally and in every state is fundamental to what we do in ABC News. We are hoping that a sensible compromise can be achieved. Thank you all.

CHAIR: Thank you.

DAGAN, Mr Ross Edward, Director of News, Network Ten, Brisbane

CHAIR: Our next witness is Mr Dagan, the Director of News at Network Ten. Mr Dagan, I noticed you have been in the room for a little while. I understand you were in the room for my opening statement to the previous witness?

Mr Dagan: That is right.

CHAIR: In which case you have heard the terms of reference of the broadcast committee.

Mr Dagan: One would hope so.

CHAIR: My fellow committees members have certainly heard it quite a few times as well. I do need to say that this committee reports to the Legislative Assembly by 30 May 2008. The hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and subject to the Legislative Assembly's standard rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath, but I remind you that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. As we stated in our correspondence to you, we intend to adhere to our scheduled times and I ask you to make a succinct opening statement. I will give you that opportunity now and then I will invite committee members to ask questions.

Mr Dagan: I thank you all for the opportunity to appear before the select committee. As the Director of News of the Ten Network in Brisbane, I welcome the chance to present the network's submission to the committee. We believe that the issue of who controls the images of parliament and how they are controlled are of utmost importance to the people of Queensland. More than 96 per cent of callers to a Ten News phone poll on the issue said they did not want politicians controlling what they see on TV. There were more than 3,600 calls. Only a question on daylight saving has had as many people wanting to register their view. This is not a complicated debate, nor does it need to be. Any scenario where that control is taken away from the independent television stations or is restricted in some way does in fact constitute a perception of censorship.

Our submission covers all three of the committee's terms of reference, which I am happy to address now. Firstly, Ten considers the Queensland parliament is one of the most open in Australia for television broadcast coverage. Whilst a comparison with other jurisdictions is certainly warranted, it may not be the case that harmonising the broadcast system with other regimes in Australia does in fact improve that coverage. The federal parliament has an extensive in-house camera system that would be expensive to replicate. To bring Queensland's internal broadcast to such a standard would result in a significant cost to taxpayers. Furthermore, the in-house system is subject to greater restrictions on what may be broadcast.

For more than a decade the current system has achieved the objectives for broadcasting parliamentary proceedings. In 1996 strict rules were agreed to for camera coverage of parliament in Queensland, including rules regarding the broadcast of pictures of members of parliament. The networks have paid for the installation of the system and they continue to meet the ongoing expense of that system. Over the years any issues in relation to this coverage have been resolved in negotiation with the Speaker, without a need to enforce sanctions. These rules include banning any offending television station from parliament coverage for a period of time. Ten considers the current rules to be sufficient but is happy to discuss this issue.

Secondly, Ten supports the live video and audio broadcast of parliament online using the parliamentary telecast system. However, the two television network cameras placed on the parliament floor provide a greater range of camera shots than the fixed-wall cameras of the parliamentary telecast system. For example, our camera operators can quickly adapt to proceedings and film the reactions of members of parliament. In contrast, the in-house system provides inflexible coverage with a smaller range of camera shots. For example, the fixed cameras provide only limited wide shots of the government, opposition and the back of the chamber by way of reaction shots.

Thirdly, Ten supports the objective of achieving a modern, open parliament through the broadcast of chamber proceedings utilising the latest technology. Ten considers the current system using television network cameras significantly contributes to the upholding of high standards of conduct in parliament and better reflects proceedings in the chamber than the fixed-camera coverage with limited camera shots. We consider television viewers should have the same flexibility in viewing parliamentary proceedings as any member of the public can witness from the public gallery.

I make the following observations about the Speaker's offer to you last week, where he offered television networks the chance to operate and control the cameras. It is of no advantage if the cameras and the shots they provide are in the wrong place in the first place, which is what we contend. There is a delayed reaction to shot selection when camera operation is done on a remote basis and a control room director can only choose from the shots displayed before them, whereas a camera operator on the floor of the parliament has direct engagement with what is happening before him or her and can react accordingly.

As discussed above, over the years any issues regarding the television networks' coverage have been resolved in negotiation with the Speaker. The broadcast of parliament is fundamental to ensuring an open and accountable institution. Any measures that result in reduced or more limited coverage may impact on this important objective. That Queensland does not have an upper house, unlike other state and federal parliaments, makes transparency, accountability and the scrutiny of parliament even more vital than in other states. I am happy to take your questions.

CHAIR: That concludes the witness's opening statement. We might wait for the media to finish their broadcast.

Mr COPELAND: Mr Dagan, I want to ask you the same question that I asked Mr Bowen regarding the use of the footage provided by the parliamentary system outside of those two hours that the floor cameras are in place. As Spencer said, there are times when the journalists are advised that something is going to happen and the cameras come back in. There are also times when the advice does not happen and something blows up on the floor of parliament. How would you see using the footage provided by the parliamentary system in those cases, now that it will be available?

Mr Dagan: It is a last resort. To take you up on that point, the television networks have covered parliament clearly outside the hours of 9.30 to 11.30 on many occasions when that has become clear. It would be rare that there was not some advice or some knowledge about proceedings needing to have cameras returned to the parliament. It is interesting. You asked the question about censorship before and I was interested to hear the response from Bernard Bowen. There is a line in the sand, I think, where you get to the point where there certainly have been restrictions on what can be done in parliament and they have been agreed to. That is a perfectly fair thing to happen. However, at some point those restrictions step beyond that mark and become, arguably, censorship. I think the same is true if the camera shots are used as a last resort, and they really are there as a last resort. They are not the preference, they are not the ideal, they are not what the situation should be in a perfect scenario. As a last resort they have to be, but that is because they are the last resort.

Mr COPELAND: For those times when the networks or the journalists are not advised that something is going to happen—and from time to time there is something that blows up—now that it is available you would use that, even if it is the last resort?

Mr Dagan: I think we have to.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Considering your deadline, Ross, you would be under slightly more pressure if something were to happen in the late afternoon. The other networks would have an hour's grace and the ABC has two hours' grace.

Mr Dagan: Certainly. I am sure most of the committee members would be aware of the minutes and seconds that can make a journalist reach a deadline or break a deadline. It is particularly more challenging for Network Ten than Seven and Nine, and certainly the ABC.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Can you explain to the committee—I certainly know from my background—that certain sport will give you feeds of training camps, interviews and so on. Most of the networks will use that as a backup to supplement what they already have. I know it is not quite the same, but it is something that particular sports make available for you to use. Most networks would rather use their own footage, their own interviews and everything else, but at times they have had to fall back on those.

Mr Dagan: That is exactly right, but Chris I think the difference is that a cameraman or camerawoman has shot that vision. It has been a real person with a real camera in a real environment reacting to what is happening before them. We cannot compare apples and oranges. We have fixed cameras with no direct control versus the scenario that you are describing where presumably a professional camera operator has been engaged to provide pool vision. There is a distinction there in terms of what the outcome is. But yes, of course that happens.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Equally again, I presume you would agree with previous witnesses to the committee—and I will give you the chance to agree or not agree with it—that given the newsworthiness of any particular story you would use whatever images and pictures you had available to you, no matter what the quality of those images or pictures?

Mr Dagan: It is a case-by-case discussion. You mentioned before the issue of using mobile phone images. Clearly that is done because there is no other option. It is a last resort.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I notice Channel 10 specifically seeks those out from members of the public.

Mr Dagan: Absolutely. As a progressive modern media organisation, yes, that is exactly the case. I guess the issue comes down to a choice on the day, in the seconds you have available to decide 'What do we go with?' Do we go with a visionless story with these shots because they are the only ones that are available or do we ditch the story altogether?' It depends on the worthiness of the story.

CHAIR: If we had a real human in the control room controlling the fixed cameras—

Mr Dagan: Please, the Parliamentary Reporting Staff are not the subject of any criticism from Channel 10, or anyone else I don't suppose.

CHAIR: If those cameras could capture reaction shots and wide angle shots and provide you with the same type of shots, would that address your concern with those cameras?

Mr Dagan: I do not know how they can. I do not know how you can have someone in a control room providing the same level of skill as someone physically behind the camera within the chamber. I do not know how that is physically possible, mentally possible and artistically possible. There is the reaction time to think about. Imagine your frame of reference to this committee is this image. If you have a camera focused on you and you alone and the control room does not have a wider view, there is no way to know that Chris is doing something on this side or someone is speaking from that side. You have to have the

perception of what is happening within the chamber to make those shot selections quickly. Then you have to have the ability to make the change in shot quickly. I do not believe that is possible if you are not physically controlling a camera in the chamber.

Mrs PRATT: I have asked every person who has been seated where you are today the same question. Have many complaints have been brought to you over the media activity in the chamber? If so, how many would there be per annum on average? How do you deal with it?

Mr Dagan: My answer is different to everybody else because I have been in this job for three months.

Mrs PRATT: Then we will limit you to three months.

Mr Dagan: That is right. I have not had an occasion where a complaint has been raised with me in that time. In the normal course of events it would certainly be raised with our state political editor, Cathy Border, and then I would hope certainly, if the circumstance arose, it would be brought to my attention, depending on the severity of the complaint.

Mrs PRATT: You have not heard of it in the past, either, from other people talking about it?

Mr Dagan: No, I have not, to be honest.

Mr COPELAND: You have no qualms with the quality of the picture itself being provided by the parliamentary broadcast service, notwithstanding the limitations on reactions and everything else. As Spencer said earlier, he is not debating the quality of the picture. Would you agree with that? Some of the submissions have actually said that the quality is fairly ordinary.

Mr Dagan: Yes. Our submission did not comment on the technical suitability of the system. I am not an engineering expert. I am not a television expert in terms of the broadcast of television. I am a journalist and my skill and my expertise revolve around the decisions about how I use the material I get, not the technical aspects of it. But certainly there would seem to be nothing that would preclude its use in a technical capacity.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Again, going to the peculiarities of, say, Ten, who have an hour to fill—

Mr Dagan: That is a nice way to put it.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Idiosyncrasies perhaps, then.

Mr COPELAND: Luxury.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Yes. You would have scope then for more expansive stories perhaps certainly in a political sense. As a news director, if the picture quality and variety was not there, as Bernard Bowen was suggesting, would a story become less in stature, become an RVO or something similar—

Mr COPELAND: What is an RVO?

Mr BOMBOLAS: A reader voiceover—given the nature of those pictures? That is a danger of having to accept a feed as opposed to having your cameras there with a variety of shots.

Mr Dagan: That is certainly the case. An hour is a luxury and it does give us more time to delve more deeply into stories that the other news outlets may not. We often do political stories in greater volume and greater length in terms of number and length of the stories than the main stations at 6 pm—Nine and Seven. But at the same time there is plenty of content to choose from. We would prefer to have local content—the more local content the better. We would certainly prefer to be covering worthy political stories more than some other international story or some other package from outside of Queensland. If it came down to a choice about whether we had to use two political type packages today or one because of the picture quality and using another package to fill that time, the vision choice would certainly become a crucial part of that discussion. Yes, reducing a package down to a reader voiceover happens today. If the story sounds great and the vision does not match up, it gets 30 seconds rather than one minute 30.

Ms JONES: Mr Dagan, some of the evidence that we have been provided with from the Speaker and the Clerk is that they felt that politicians felt that they could not make complaints against journalists breaching the rules for TV because there could be retribution by the journalists. What would you say to that as a news editor? I guess I am asking you how would you perceive that?

Mr Dagan: I can only talk from my perspective and, again, I would remind you that I have been in this role for three months so I have not been placed in that position. I think journalists are human beings, to use that word again. There is no harm in someone picking up the phone and saying—

Mr NICHOLLS: Do you have medical evidence for this?

Ms JONES: I was a press sec before I was elected.

Mr Dagan: So are we in agreement or not? You need another inquiry to ask this question. What is wrong with a phone call? Why can't a phone call happen and start the process? Clearly there are mechanisms in place to escalate that should the person not be happy with the response. I see no problem with the suggestion made earlier of some independent arbiter being involved in those disputes when they reach the point of needing some resolution. People ring up TV stations all the time—every day—I can assure you of that. It would be no different for a politician to do that.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Thousands of times if it is a poll.

Mr Dagan: Exactly—3,600. We sometimes complicate these things more than they need to be. If there is a problem say so. Ask the question. Make the point. Maybe that is a very simplistic approach, but it works in most other environments when there are complaints against TV stations from viewers and other people featured on television.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Dagan, in your submission you refer to television viewers having the same viewing of the parliament as the public can witness from the public gallery. In fact, wouldn't the fixed cameras or the cameras that have been placed there by the parliament at the moment provide a better view, because in the gallery you are up high, you are limited, you can only see mostly half of the chamber at the best of times? The fixed cameras actually provide better viewing than the gallery provides, don't they?

Mr Dagan: I think it depends on that reaction. Fixed cameras are fixed, to make a simple statement again. If you are watching from the gallery then you have the ability to change your perspective. You have the ability to look around. You can see where the attention is focused and make a judgement at that time. It is much harder to do that if the shot you have is set aside as a fixed shot.

Mr NICHOLLS: But there are a number of shots from those nine cameras, aren't there? There is the one on the Speaker—even if it is limited to the 12 members on the respective front benches, if you like.

Mr Dagan: Certainly. But you still have to make a choice to choose those shots, and the time it takes to make that choice manually and from a remote location is not as quick, I contend, as to have a look around. It is a simplistic argument but at the same time it is a fact of how these things are. It is not as practical.

Mr NICHOLLS: Have you been up to the public gallery to have a look?

Mr Dagan: Many moons ago. I have been to the public gallery, yes. Not in recent years, no.

Mrs PRATT: Ross, if the image being streamed through the broadcast system were the only way it was allowed to happen, would there be a fear that whoever has that ultimate control of the parliament—the person who controls the rulings, such as Mr Speaker or possibly a committee or something later on—would start to strip back any rights of the media?

Mr Dagan: Could I suggest that that is why we are here. Clearly the Speaker has made certain suggestions and clearly the media gallery has not liked them. Clearly that has reached a point of crescendo where you good people are sitting in front of me and asking me questions. Of course that is a significant concern.

Mrs PRATT: Would that be the primary concern?

Mr Dagan: I think we get back to the point of stepping over the line. Of course people are willing to operate in a spirit of cooperation and conciliation, and I think that has happened for many years. But at some point if that looks like it is being abused or there is more being taken away, then of course there needs to be an argument and a discussion about that.

Mrs PRATT: Can you see any way around that at all?

Mr Dagan: I think there are certainly reasons to consider compromise. There are ways to consider compromise, but compromise by the nature of the definition of the word means that that happens on both sides of the argument.

Mrs PRATT: But you cannot see any way where it could get to the point of actually removing the cameras from the chamber?

Mr Dagan: Again, to use the simplistic line, unless we can find some way of having a human being control a camera in the parliament to have that reaction ability, it does not provide us with the shot flexibility. That is the essence of the argument.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Would you, as in the Ten Network, be happy to use the fixed cameras, if they were to remain, plus the feed? Would you use both if that were an option?

Mr Dagan: I do not see any reason why that could not be part of some compromise discussion, as long as there was a guarantee concerning the variety of shots we could gain.

Mr BOMBOLAS: But you could see the mix happening. If something was missed by the fixed cameras in the coverage of the parliament, you could supplement that coverage and put them both to air.

Mr Dagan: There would be no reason to suggest that they should not be combined in some form and that compromise is worth discussing.

CHAIR: There are no further questions from the committee. Mr Dagan, thank you very much for your time today appearing before the committee. It is important for the work of the committee that we hear from network representatives. We appreciate the fact that you have come along. Welcome to your new role as the director of news at the Ten Network. I also thank you for your written submission, which was detailed and addressed the terms of reference of the committee. We were pleased to receive that too. Thank you.

Mr Dagan: Thank you for your time.

CONDREN, Mr Patrick Gerard, State Political Correspondent, Seven Network

CHAIR: The next witness to appear before the committee is Mr Patrick Condren, representing Channel 7. Mr Condren, I am aware that you have been in the room when I have read out the terms of reference of the committee.

Mr Condren: I will cut you some slack.

CHAIR: I believe you have some knowledge of the terms of reference of the committee and some awareness that the committee is undertaking its business today. I do not think I need to introduce any of the members of the committee again. But I would like to say that this hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and it is subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath, but I will remind you that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. As we stated in our original correspondence, it is our intention to adhere to our scheduled times and ask you to provide a succinct opening statement. We will then take the opportunity to ask questions. So at this time I would like to give you an opportunity to make an opening statement.

Mr Condren: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. First of all, I would like to thank you and your committee for the opportunity to appear here this afternoon. Apologies for my voice; I am getting over a lurgy. Another apology is from the Seven news director, Rob Raschke, who was originally down to do this. He had to take some leave and is therefore unavailable today.

From Channel 7's perspective clearly there are two issues here: a technical one and an ethical one. Not being an engineer I cannot address the first in any depth, except to say that any objective viewing of the two feeds would acknowledge there is a difference in the quality of the picture and the quality and variety of the shots being provided. As to the ethics of removing the free-to-air cameras, it is a fundamental tenet of journalism that the reporter chooses and provides audio and vision to the audience. Anything else is censorship, only if it is the perception of censorship.

So far we have heard a lot about providing a service equal to that in Canberra. But why should we settle for second best? Why shouldn't the Queensland parliament strive to offer the best coverage in Australia rather than downgrade it to the equivalent of the federal parliament? With that in mind, I would like to suggest leaving both systems in place. That way the news network viewers would get the best possible coverage and those who choose to access the debates via the internet can do so. I am happy to answer any of your questions.

CHAIR: Thank you for that succinct opening statement.

Ms JONES: He is not on Ten.

Mr Condren: I do not have an hour to fill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Did you participate in a boycott of the system?

CHAIR: Hold on. We will proceed with the committee when the broadcast ceases.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have given him time to think about an answer now.

Mr Condren: That is an easy one to answer.

CHAIR: Mr Nicholls, proceed with your questions.

Mr NICHOLLS: We have heard reference about a boycott being made in a number of submissions, particularly by the Speaker, and also in statements to the parliament. Was there a boycott by the free-to-air media of the feed that was provided by the parliament?

Mr Condren: No.

Mr NICHOLLS: Did you at any time use the system or try to use the system to put a story together?

Mr Condren: The incident to which you refer—my understanding of the discussion we had at the time was that there was to be provided an in-house feed to run in conjunction with the free-to-air feed and that a non-broadcasted comparison be made of the two feeds to evaluate the quality of the in-house feed.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you never tried to put a story together using the in-house feed?

Mr Condren: No. At that stage it was deemed not of sufficient quality to be used to be broadcast on Channel 7.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you.

Mrs PRATT: Why was it not suitable quality?

Mr Condren: The shot selection that was available and the quality of the picture.

Mrs PRATT: What was wrong with the pictures?

Mr Condren: They were not up to broadcast standard.

Mrs PRATT: Can you tell me the difference because I am not a technical person?

Mr Condren: I sympathise. Nor am I a technical person.

Mrs PRATT: They looked pretty good to me when I saw them.

Mr Condren: Given the nature of the equipment, the cameras that were in here before are \$150,000 cameras and they provide the highest quality for broadcast and rebroadcast whereas the quality that there was at that stage—I think the incident Mr Nicholls is talking about happened 12 or 18 months ago; is that your understanding?

Mr NICHOLLS: I was not—

Mr Condren: At that stage the quality of the picture was deemed not sufficient.

Mrs PRATT: The ABC used the footage, and as a layperson I would never have picked any difference at all.

Mr Condren: I cannot speak for the ABC. However, as a member of the leading news network in Brisbane, we tend to subscribe to a higher quality.

Mr COPELAND: Following on from that, I asked this question of the two previous witnesses. As we all know, things happen outside the first two hours on the floor of the parliament. When you have notice that something is going to happen then you have organised your cameras to be in there previously. *Stateline* used the footage from outside of footage provided by the on-floor cameras. If something does happen, would you foresee that you would use footage provided by the parliamentary system if your cameras were not there and something newsworthy did happen at 10 o'clock at night or whenever it may be?

Mr Condren: Yeah, sure, if it was something of significance that did happen. That might be something that went into a broader package. For example, if you are using amateur footage in a news story you would subtitle it 'amateur footage' so that the viewers would know exactly what you are getting. So in that instance you would label it 'in-house parliamentary coverage' or something along those lines.

Mr COPELAND: In the submission from Channel 7—and you have said that you are not a technical person, so you may not be able to answer this—regarding the quality of the system it says—

The images of quality expected from consumer DV cam or high-end security cameras lacks picture detail, colour saturation, has a grainy finish ...

Other witnesses have said that the quality of the picture itself is not an issue; it is the shot selection, position of the cameras and those sorts of things. Is the picture an issue in your view or is it just those other things—

Mr Condren: I showed a DVD of the recording to our engineers. He took it away and viewed it, and that is his response.

Mr COPELAND: So that is the engineer's response that has been incorporated in that submission?

Mr Condren: Yes.

Mr COPELAND: Finally, the Channel 7 Queensland submission said that you provide footage to your affiliates around Queensland.

Mr Condren: That is correct.

Mr COPELAND: How often would you do that? What is the number of times per week? Is it only on request? What would be the average?

Mr Condren: It depends if something relevant happens for their area. I could not say a specific number of times each sitting session, but if during the course of ministerials ministers get up and talk about a specific region I will alert them to the fact that that happens, and then make that footage available to them. If they want it, they will ring me up and ask me for it.

Mr COPELAND: For those regional members who are not members of cabinet, or shadow cabinet, I guess, who are not usually speaking during the first two hours, would you ever get requests from your affiliates to get footage outside of the first two hours of members if there is an issue arising?

Mr Condren: Never. I have never had that incident. You are talking about, say, for example—

Mr COPELAND: If a regional member is speaking about an issue during an MPI that might be important in Toowoomba, which is not a good example because we do not have WIN in our case, but they may request coverage of that.

Mr Condren: I have never had anyone ask me for something that happens outside the two hours.

Mrs PRATT: Patrick, with regard to complaints, one of the reasons for bringing in the parliamentary broadcast system was the number of complaints that have been made to the Speaker about the cameras being on them at inappropriate times et cetera. How many complaints are you aware of and in what period?

Mr Condren: When you talk about inappropriate times, can I make the point that just because a camera is pointing at someone does not mean that it is recording. If it is recording and it is at an inappropriate time, if it is outside the guidelines which have been laid down for television news journalists, the responsibility for whether that gets to air or not rests with people like me, with state political reporters. It is not a matter for the camera person to decide if a shot is used. That final responsibility in Channel 7's case is mine and mine alone.

Mrs PRATT: Some of the complaints have been about what did appear on TV.

Mr Condren: Sure. But I am just addressing that aspect of it. In terms of complaints—

Mrs PRATT: Has the Speaker approached you on a number of occasions conveying complaints from members of parliament?

Mr Condren: The Speaker has never approached me—

Mrs PRATT: Verbally or written?

Mr Condren: No. He made comments about it in a meeting we had with him and that was the first I had ever heard of any complaints.

Mrs PRATT: And no complaints to the station either?

Mr Condren: No.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Was there anyone other than the Speaker who has raised issues with you about stepping outside the guidelines?

Mr Condren: Not in an official capacity, no.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Well, what is an unofficial capacity?

Mr Condren: Well, if Jonesy does not like being on the tele and she rings me up and says, 'Why did you put me on the tele?', that to me is an unofficial complaint. I do not want to suggest that it is a complaint in any way, shape or form.

Mr COPELAND: Do you get those sorts of phone calls?

Mr Condren: I have had one phone call some time ago from a minister who expressed some points of view which I took on board, but I have never had an official complaint.

Mrs PRATT: Could you say—whether it is an unofficial or an official complaint—that you have had one per year, or one per sitting, or one in five years?

Mr Condren: Well, I have been the state political reporter for 5½ years at Channel 7, and the minister's phone call I think was the only one.

Mrs PRATT: I am just trying to get some sort of feel for how many complaints have actually been made.

Mr Condren: Sure. I know that it was something that the Speaker brought up in meetings with the gallery regarding this particular issue, and at the time I expressed some surprise that this was the case because people do not come to me—or had not come to me at that stage.

CHAIR: I have seen the transcript of those meetings with the Speaker. They have been provided in our documentation, so there is a public record of those meetings with the Speaker. I have to say from reading the transcript it seemed like a fairly volatile kind of meeting, notwithstanding the fact that 'if you were any cooler you would be comatose' I think was your comment.

Mr Condren: He started it.

CHAIR: The Speaker showed members of the media at that time a number of examples which he felt were breaches of the guidelines. How do you react to those suggestions that they were breaches of the guidelines, bearing in mind I know that it was some time ago? But did you feel at the time they were appropriate?

Mr Condren: I think both Spencer and I addressed those issues. I think at the time we were operating under a system where no-one had seen the guidelines for some time. I do not think at that stage the Speaker had a copy of them, or he might have only recently received a copy of them. I am not sure. But in terms of complaints, if people feel they have an issue and they need to make a complaint, or if they feel they have something they need clarified, I am happy to take their telephone call at any time of the day or the night. If the Speaker feels that he needs to talk to me, I am happy to talk to him about it. It is very difficult—as you have just outlined—in hindsight to go back over a period of time and say, 'Was this or was this not appropriate?' If something happens that an MP feels is outside the guidelines, what is wrong with ringing someone up and saying, 'I think that was outside the guidelines,' or making an official complaint to the Speaker? To find out after a period of time that it was suggested that there had been a number of complaints was news to me.

CHAIR: I am interested in your comment that you were operating without awareness of the guidelines or without knowledge of the guidelines at the time—

Mr Condren: Well, at that stage we knew there were guidelines but no-one had seen them, and this is a few years ago.

CHAIR: Is that what led them to be recorded in the *Hansard*? It was February 2006 when they were recorded—

Mr Condren: I cannot remember the exact sequence of events, but there were discussions with one of the Speakers. I do not know if it was Speaker Reynolds, McGrady or Hollis, but the issue of guidelines came up because the Speaker at the time did not have a written copy of the guidelines.

CHAIR: Do you think there is a lack of awareness amongst media of the guidelines in existence?

Mr Condren: Not now. Copies have been distributed certainly to the four television broadcast journalists. The most updated version—I think there is a draft version, there is a previous draft version and a version before that. We think we have had to level a rainforest to print all the versions of the guidelines at the moment.

Ms JONES: That brings me to the question which I think is key to us, which is how we resolve this issue. When we spoke to Spencer earlier when he gave his evidence he said that the press gallery would be comfortable with the rules that were drafted by Speaker Tony McGrady. Is that your view?

Mr Condren: Yes.

Ms JONES: I want to ask you this question because I have asked it of all the journalists and the news editors who have appeared. In the evidence we have received politicians have raised the issue that they feel they cannot make complaints even if they think there is a clear breach of the guidelines because of fear of retribution, that a journalist may then pursue them. What would you say to that?

Mr Condren: It is contrary to the journalists code of ethics to take retribution. It is contrary to our code of ethics under the Australian Journalists Association.

Ms JONES: Further, you may have been in the room earlier when Stirling mentioned that a possible way forward would be to have an independent arbiter deciding what has been a clear breach or not in a quick manner. I would like to get your view on how that could possibly work. One of the big problems is timeliness obviously, because it goes to the news that night. I would be interested in any suggestions that you have.

Mr Condren: I think an independent arbiter in some way, shape or form is an excellent idea. I think removing the complaints process from within the government of the day is an excellent idea. I have ethical concerns about people making anonymous complaints, but in terms of an independent arbiter I think that is an excellent idea. I really do not know how it would work. That would obviously be up to greater minds than mine.

CHAIR: If a member came to you and complained about the way they were portrayed in your coverage, you would not then show that coverage again in your story about the complaint?

Mr Condren: I know where you are coming from.

CHAIR: I am just picking up on the question of—

Mr Condren: Sure. It depends if it is a complaint that 'I don't like the way my hair was done' or if it is a complaint that 'This was outside the guidelines'. Obviously if it is outside the guidelines and that MP has a legitimate concern and a legitimate complaint, if I broadcast it again I am liable to the penalties that are laid down in the guidelines. If it is a complaint that 'I really didn't like the way that tie came up on the tele' that is a—

Mr FINN: I would not expect that you have had any of those.

Mr Condren: No.

Mr COPELAND: Although you should have.

Mr Condren: Leaving aside your ties, Stuart! I think that is why, from a personal perspective, it is vital that the complaints procedure system be robust and streamlined, because at the moment we have MPs going to complain to the Speaker about a camera being on them. As I said to Dorothy before, just because the camera is pointing at you does not mean it is turned on and it does not mean it is recording. At the end of the day, if it is recording and the shot that is taken is outside the guidelines, the responsibility rests with me. If you have a robust, streamlined, comprehensive complaints penalty system, I think that ensures that everyone gets the best possible deal.

Mr NICHOLLS: You have been involved in some of the discussions with the Speaker as part of your role as secretary of the press gallery. Are you aware of any reasons put forward why your cameras are proposed to be removed?

Mr Condren: No.

Mr NICHOLLS: Has that been discussed? Has that question been asked of the Speaker?

Mr Condren: We have asked the question.

Mr NICHOLLS: And you haven't received an answer to it?

Mr Condren: No—not one that I thought was satisfactory.

Mr NICHOLLS: Not that you have been aware of. Secondly, are you aware of any action taken by the Speaker with any regional affiliates in relation to taking the in-house provided feed, contacting regional affiliates directly or anything like that with material?

Mr Condren: There was an incident I think with 7Q in Townsville—obviously Mr Reynolds, being from Townsville, has a vested interest in promoting himself there—where he or his office suggested to the Townsville people that this vision was available and a DVD copy was delivered to my office. Unfortunately, I do not have the technical abilities down here to send it out, so I could not send it up to them. Basically, I do not have a DVD player here. It is as simple as that.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is interesting for the No. 1 news broadcasting network not to have a DVD player, but nonetheless.

Mr Condren: It is amazing what we do with the money that we have.

Mr NICHOLLS: Nonetheless, it is quite amazing. Did that story then get a run in Townsville or was it subsequently—

Mr Condren: I could not tell you, I am sorry. There are lots of incidents where regional journalists ring me up and ask me for politicians of the day—whether it be the Premier's press conference or the Leader of the Opposition's press conference or to do pick-up interviews with various MPs. Sometimes I can facilitate that and sometimes because of the burden of deadlines and the pressure of work I just cannot get to them.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is hard staying at No. 1, isn't it.

Mr Condren: It is, but I am getting used to it.

Ms JONES: Along those lines, then, I would appreciate your comment. Having worked for a regional minister who represented a city where there is an affiliate, there would be times when a story could not be covered because the journalist in Brisbane would not have the time and would not be able to do that, which you could understand. So do you perceive that maybe having this broadcasting ability could enhance coverage in regional Queensland, considering we are the most decentralised state in Australia?

Mr Condren: In terms of the in-house broadcast via the internet?

Ms JONES: Being able to use the footage which gets provided to you, does it not? During the trial, you have had access to the footage that has been captured. My question is: in some cases could that improve the coverage of political stories or major infrastructure stories in regional Queensland?

Mr Condren: Yes, I understand where you are coming from. Logistically, it is an issue, because when the vision comes into my office at Parliament House it then has to be sent out to Mount Coot-tha and then from Mount Coot-tha to the regions. So it is not just a simple matter of pushing a button and saying, 'Here's Robert Schwarten for Rockhampton.' It is a lot more involved than that. Logistically, it can be quite burdensome.

Ms JONES: So that would require maybe significant upgrades to the media suites down here? We are just trying to get to the technical question of whether it is actually possible.

Mr Condren: I am not a technical person, but it would require multiple feeds and multiple satellite dishes on the roof of the parliament to send out the feeds. There are just not enough hours in the day to be able to send out everything to everywhere. Where does it end? You are sending out to the relevant MPs to each region? Someone is going to miss out at the end of the day.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Patrick, from a technical point of view, if the footage that was made available through the Parliamentary Service did come up to scratch and adjustments were made—and I have asked each of the other people appearing before the committee this question—could you see that supplementing the two-camera system that you use currently?

Mr Condren: Working in conjunction?

Mr BOMBOLAS: In conjunction. If there was something that your two cameras missed that was on that parliamentary feed, given the technical quality being boosted, could you see that being part of your package at six o'clock?

Mr Condren: Yes, sure, but that happens at the moment. Whilst saying that, yes, definitely, but that happens at the moment. If there is something outside the ministerials and question time that happens in the course of the afternoon—take, for example, the stem cell debate—we know that is coming up so we put the cameras back in there. So there are occasions when events happen outside those two hours—those two key hours—where the cameras have gone back in to cover the debate, yes.

Mr BOMBOLAS: But this could be an example where you do not get any notice, where the only footage available at 5.35 is the Parliamentary Service that you need to include in your six o'clock package.

Mr Condren: Sure. Unfortunately for me, that would not happen simply because, as you would know, at the 5.30 deadline I am up at Mount Coot-tha editing my package together. There is no-one sitting in my office, so there is no way to get it from my office.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Say four o'clock then, for instance. But if there was a late—

Mr Condren: The point is relevant, but the timing is a bit—

CHAIR: So would you use that footage? Is that your question?

Mr BOMBOLAS: My question is if the quality is—

Mr Condren: On the proviso that it came up to the quality. The point, I suppose, is that you are not using that footage in isolation; you are using it within a package. When you put a television news package together, it is not a matter of simply marrying a whole lot of different grabs up. As you know yourselves when you watch a television news story, obviously when it comes to television you have to write to the words, you have to have the pictures relevant to the words that you are writing and then you stitch it all together into a one-minute 20, one-minute 30 cloth. So you would not just be relying on that single event

for your entire package. It might be just a grab from the person. If the Premier has come in and made a statement, it might be just a grab from that person within a greater package. So you have the good-quality stuff first and the poorer-quality stuff last.

Mr BOMBOLAS: But you could see yourself using that to supplement your package, given the quality—

Mr Condren: If it was a significant news event.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Because that is within our parameters, if there needs to be a compromise, to see which way—

Mr Condren: But you see, if you are doing a package out of the rest of the day's events, you have all the other stuff that has been shot on the good cameras.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Sure, yes. The same goes if you have phone video footage that was sensational, you would still include that in your package, given the nature of it.

Mr Condren: Sure. With respect, the mobile phone footage that you have discussed previously is usually taken at disasters and I do not think anyone would suggest that parliament is a disaster, except on the rare occasion. It is a set-piece environment. It is an environment where you know what is going to be happening, you know where the players are going to be. In a mobile phone instance, you happen to be there, you squirt off some shots on your mobile phone, you ring Channel 7 and hawk it for 600 bucks or something and away you would go.

Mrs PRATT: Is that what it is worth?

Mr Condren: I think it is more than that, Dorothy.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Referring back to your earlier evidence in relation to the guidelines, you made it clear that you felt that you and your colleagues in the electronic gallery did not have the guidelines and did not have them to hand, obviously.

Mr Condren: Certainly, in the first couple of years I did not have a copy of the guidelines, no.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: So in that time period, do you recall any instances where you may have directed camera operators to take shots that would not have fallen within the guidelines and may have used those shots? It is understandable if you did not know that.

Mr Condren: Sure, sure. While I did not have a hard copy of the guidelines, certainly, I had been made aware of what we could use and what we could not use in a very broad sense. The fact was that we did not go into the minutiae of what we have here, but there were things that we could or could not do. For example, unless the Speaker refers to someone in the gallery, you are not allowed to use any vision out of the public gallery. So if there is an event up there with a protester unfurling something, we cannot take a shot of that or we cannot use a shot of that. But I have never directed—before or after—a news cameraman to take a shot that I would use, deliberately breaching the guidelines.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: In relation to those guidelines, one of the guidelines that you are now aware of—but may not have been at the time—is that the Speaker or the Speaker's delegate has the power to instruct camera operators as to how they operate their equipment.

Mr Condren: Yes.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Did you make that clear to the camera operators during that time when you were not aware of that? I presume you do now.

Mr Condren: What is the question?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: One of the issues that we heard evidence about previously was the example you gave of a disturbance in the gallery where instructions were given by delegates of the Speaker to camera operators not to film the disturbance in the gallery and the camera operator's response—and this obviously is one of the pool camera operators; it not specifically referring to you at all—was, 'Well, we won't do anything until our journalists tell us not to do it.' I just wanted to clarify that.

Mr Condren: Unless you can tell me who you were talking to, I really could not say. I cannot speak for what a cameraman says to someone.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: But you were aware of that specific guideline during that two-year period when you had not seen the written document?

Mr Condren: I am certainly aware of it now, which comes back to the timeliness of stuff that we were talking about previously. If something like that happened—I do not know who the cameraman was. He might have had a bad day at the pub and was a bit cranky or something. I honestly genuinely do not know.

CHAIR: But you would know whether you had ever spoken to a camera operator, for example, about what they should or should not be filming?

Mr Condren: I speak to a camera operator every day about what he should or should not be filming.

CHAIR: Have those discussions ever been about the filming of something that might be considered unparliamentary, which is the word used in the guidelines, for example, a protest?

Mr Condren: Not having any forewarning of a protest, I could not say to a cameraman, 'Make sure you get a shot of the protest.'

CHAIR: But you could say in retrospect, 'Why didn't you?'

Mr Condren: Yes.

CHAIR: You could see an event occurring—

Mr Condren: Sure, I could.

CHAIR: And you could say to the camera operator, 'Why didn't you?'

Mr Condren: But the bottom line comes back to—

Ms JONES: It is your responsibility.

Mr Condren: I refer you to the honourable member for Ashgrove, Mr Chair. The ultimate responsibility is mine. So it does not matter what the cameraman shoots. Every shot he takes could be outside the guidelines. All that would mean is that I cannot use anything that he shoots. The ultimate responsibility is mine. You have to remember these are men who are used to being out on the road where if an event is unfolding before them, they film everything. So if a disturbance happens, their natural reaction is to get a shot of it. I know I cannot use it, so when I am compiling my story that night I say to the editor, 'We cannot use that shot because it is outside the guidelines.' I can only restate the fact that the ultimate, the final say on what goes to air is mine, so therefore any penalties should be levied on me and not the poor old cameraman.

CHAIR: Sure. So networks then would have in the can a large amount of footage that is outside the guidelines?

Mr Condren: No, not necessarily. Only stuff that has gone to air. We have a vast library of material that has already gone to air. In terms of what is saved from each sitting, I can only speak for what I get librated. More often than not, unless it is a significant event, it does not last more than seven days. The tapes are recycled every seven days. Say, for example, we were sitting in there today, by next Tuesday those raw tapes, if Channel 7 had been the pool crew, would have been erased.

CHAIR: That is what I was asking.

Mr BOMBOLAS: So it would not appear on a goof reel?

Mr Condren: I have seen some of yours.

CHAIR: Or on YouTube.

Mr Condren: Yes. Where does it end? You bring up YouTube. Who is to say that the internet feed that the Speaker is putting out there will not end up on YouTube? There are all sorts of issues involved there as well.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: There are sanctions against anyone who does that.

CHAIR: That is one of the issues in that if you put to air footage that is outside the guidelines, it can then be repeatedly shown in a whole range of different forums.

Mr Condren: Yes

CHAIR: Without sanction.

Mr Condren: Yes, and I think that is probably one of the burdens of any new guidelines and any new penalties. You have to take into account that retrospectivity, because who is to say that stuff when D'arcy was here does not get dragged out and put to air and it might be outside the guidelines?

CHAIR: Sure.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Would you agree with Spencer that the guidelines need to be made a little more succinct and clear—marked out a little more clearly?

Mr Condren: I agree with everything Spencer says.

Mr BOMBOLAS: That is good. Are you one of the journalists who may push the boundaries, considering the guidelines may be a bit grey? It is not really black and white what can and cannot be shown.

Mr Condren: I do the best possible job I can with the limited resources I have, adhering to the guidelines and within the ethics of the AJA.

CHAIR: Without a DVD player.

Mr Condren: Without a DVD player. You couldn't spring for one, could you?

Ms JONES: So in working forward, you would be happy to be in any group or on any committee to try to draft guidelines—guidelines drawn up collaboratively with journalists?

Mr Condren: Very much so. I think MPs have legitimate concerns from their perspective in terms of how they are covered within the chamber. Some of it is coming from a position of ignorance because they just do not know how the system works. They just do not understand how a television news story is prepared. I think in any rules governing journalists and politicians you need to have both sides involved in drafting those rules. Yes, sure, I am happy to be involved and to have my input.

CHAIR: That brings this section of the hearing to a close. I thank you, Mr Condren, for attending today and providing the committee with evidence. Can you pass back through the network the committee's appreciation for the written submission as well.

Mr Condren: Shall do.

CHAIR: Thank you for your time.

Mr Condren: Thank you.

CHAIR: I declare the hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 12.44 pm



BROADCAST OF PARLIAMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Members:

Mr S.D. Finn MP (Chairperson)
Mr C. Bombolas MP
Mr S.W. Copeland MP
Mr S.J. Hinchliffe MP
Ms K.J. Jones MP
Mr T.J. Nicholls MP
Ms D.R. Pratt MP

MEETING WITH MR GEOFF COX AND MR CRAIG LARSON

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 29 APRIL 2008

Brisbane

TUESDAY, 29 APRIL 2008

Committee met at 1.09 pm

COX, Mr Geoff, Producer/Director, Tempo Pictures

CHAIR: I declare this public hearing open and welcome Mr Geoff Cox. Mr Cox has been provided with a letter outlining the terms of reference of the committee. So I do not need to read them out to you. You have introduced yourself to everyone, so I do not need to introduce everyone, which is good.

This committee is reporting to the Legislative Assembly by 30 May on those terms of reference that we have provided to you. This hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath but I remind you that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

Mr Cox: Yes.

CHAIR: You will be aware from our correspondence that we understand that you gave advice to the Parliamentary Service on the adequacy of our broadcasting system and we would like to discuss that with you.

Mr Cox: Sure.

CHAIR: We invite you to make an opening statement. Tell us a bit about that from your perspective first up.

Mr Cox: Everything that has been put in here is fine. I have no issues with it, especially from a technical point of view. It is high definition, which is the future—no issues at all. There is plenty of camera coverage in there. The only faults that I found were two. One is that there was not really good enough control of the cameras themselves. They were done by computer. They need to be more of a joystick control so you can have that feel. At the moment, they would be stumbling trying to line a camera up. If that happens right in the middle of a sentence when obviously the stations wanted to use it, they cannot use it. So that was one of the main issues.

The other thing I felt is that the people controlling and sitting there working these cameras need to be professional television people, as in news people with current affairs backgrounds, from a directing point of view—not so much a cameraman—and able to anticipate what is about to happen. Everything else I found was fine but that was where it was lacking. Obviously, there are certain laws now that have been put down by parliament. The confrontation was more, I think, from the television area and them wanting to be able to get what they want. I do not think that was the issue that was given to me by the Speaker.

I think it is extremely well covered for what is needed up there. I am still not too sure on the actual feeds coming out and going back to the stations. That was a bone of contention, but I think that is just a technical issue. I think parliament had set the standards on what they wanted to see up there.

One other thing was the actual framing of the shots which I went through with them. I felt that they need to be a little bit wider than the Speaker had allowed only for, again, movement—when people move behind chairs et cetera. Other than that, I think there are no issues with what has been put in there.

Mrs PRATT: So you would think that if a joystick device were put in and there were professional people who could anticipate things, that would solve any problem?

Mr Cox: I would say it would solve it. Yes, it would. But again, it comes back to someone who really knows what they are doing. At the moment I am not sure of the set-up, but you have two people in there. You actually need someone who controls that whole situation like in a news bulletin. There is a director there who controls everything. Like an aircraft, or anything, it just needs someone in control who knows the shots and can anticipate the call to the guys with the joystick. They are long days, obviously. So it needs to be a professional director who knows how to call that stuff, not someone who you pick up who is a trainee. Even though it can be boring, you still can miss things.

Mrs PRATT: I have just forgotten; is there a screen up there, Lucinda, that shows the whole parliament continually?

Ms Osmond: Yes, there is. We have the wide-angle view which shows the whole parliament.

Mrs PRATT: Right. But the person who is on the cameras, even if he was a professional person, would not be getting the buzz that is in the chamber; that would be correct?

CHAIR: Because they are in a remote room, you are saying.

Mrs PRATT: Yes.

Mr Cox: But they should be able to hear what is happening in parliament all the time, just like a control room in a television station, basically.

Mrs PRATT: Can they do that?

Mr Cox: Yes. They have what we call a line monitor, a preview monitor—all of that sort of thing, but it is all built into one because that is digital.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The analogy might be, Geoff, when there is a live coverage of a football match. I am roaming into someone else's experience here, but I will try to keep them out of the frame. When there is live coverage of a football match there is a director of the coverage who is sitting in a van out the back behind the grandstand.

Mr Cox: That is exactly right.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Not near the field.

Mr Cox: And they are a professional guy. That is all they do; they direct football. They might do other things, but they know football and know how to direct it. That is exactly what should happen up here. That way it solves all the issues. Everyone is happy that that person who is sitting there knows what he is doing.

Mrs PRATT: Okay.

Mr Cox: I was trained as a news director. I did it for six years. That is all I did—news and current affairs—because I knew how to handle it. When an interview gets a bit out of control you know how to handle it. I know it sounds boring, but there is quite a technique in doing it.

Mrs PRATT: I think it sounds exciting, actually, even if it is out of control.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: From your understanding is that more similar to how the operation works in the Commonwealth parliament, for instance?

Mr Cox: The Commonwealth, yes. It is the same. There is different positioning with the cameras and that, but it is no different.

Mr NICHOLLS: So in terms of the end product, is there any restriction on someone like a news director sitting upstairs in that room there? Would they be able to still produce the same quality of story that is being currently broadcast by channels 7, 9 and 2?

Mr Cox: Absolutely—probably better.

Mr NICHOLLS: So with a director up there being able to do it, they would be able to provide, including such things as cutaways and reaction shots—

Mr Cox: Absolutely.

Mr NICHOLLS: There is enough equipment in there and there is enough technical expertise and so on to be able to produce—

Mr Cox: Absolutely

Mr NICHOLLS: The sexy parts of a news story that make it interesting for viewers.

Mr Cox: Yes. My understanding is that, being an ex-news director, you want to get the stuff that people want to see at home—Joe Bloggs picking their nose and all of that sort of stuff—which is irrelevant to the news story, but that is what they want to see. From my understanding that is what we want to cut out. If that is the law set out by parliament, that is the law and you stick to it. But, yes, with the equipment up there you can put together—

Mr NICHOLLS: Say an interchange. Say Mr Finn is on one side and I am on the other and we are having a bit of an argy-bargy in the background.

CHAIR: About the Yeerongpilly train services.

Mr NICHOLLS: About train services, yes, and services in my electorate, too. We are both on side. We both agree that more needs to be done. There is enough equipment up there to be able to catch that interchange?

Mr Cox: Absolutely.

Mr NICHOLLS: It might be the guts of the story, if you like, that makes it interesting.

Mr Cox: That is right. But from what I have heard—and, again, I do not know how the law is working—at a point in time that the cameras were framing on here, you were not allowed to get cutaways there. That I think was the argument from the media and I had said to them, 'The news guys won't take it,' because they obviously want the reaction. It is no different from doing a drama.

Mrs PRATT: Of course, yes.

Mr Cox: People want to see the reaction. That was one of the things that they were against and I advised that. I said to Spencer, 'I cannot comment on that because I don't set down those laws,' but as I said to the Speaker at the time they will want to see those reactions—absolutely.

Ms JONES: And the equipment can do that?

Mr Cox: Yes, it can.

Mr NICHOLLS: So the capacity is there to do it; it is just the rules that are restricting it at the moment.

Mr Cox: The rules and again knowing that you need a director who can anticipate whether the camera is going here or whether it is going there and then the operators doing that.

Mr NICHOLLS: And the joystick would facilitate that as well?

Mr Cox: The joystick is able to work the camera. It is like a playstation at home. You just feel like being in there. Whereas at the moment you have a cameraman on the floor who knows exactly what they have to do, but that joystick has to be instant. It cannot be something that is going to take—

Ms JONES: Seconds to adjust.

Mr Cox: Five minutes standing around—

Mr NICHOLLS: Exactly—very direct.

CHAIR: Is that what fixes the current problem where framing and focus can take a few seconds?

Mr Cox: That is exactly right, because from what I saw it is done by computer screen which would drive you crazy. It would be a nightmare. It is like when we do a crane shot now, we have the joystick where we sit away from the camera and that is all just joystick operated but it is by touch. You can actually feel it. That was the only lack of equipment that I found that needed to be rectified fairly quickly.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: And operating equipment like that has become a more common thing in the industry, where there are more instances of operating a camera—I say 'remotely' but where you are doing it—

Mr Cox: Probably more so in television these days. They are doing away with cameramen more and more, but not on a movie set. I am probably talking myself out of a job.

Ms JONES: You might just be getting yourself a job.

Mr Cox: I might be.

CHAIR: You are writing the job description.

Mr Cox: It sounds boring, but it is quite difficult. In my early days in directing news they put all the trainees in the news. They never put the experienced guys in there. They have so much more experience. It is like flying an aeroplane: there is 20 years of boredom but 20 minutes of sheer hell, if you know what I mean, and you have to know how to handle that. In parliament that would be happening all the time.

Ms JONES: No comment. Some of the feedback we had was about the angles of the camera, that they were placed for aesthetic reasons. They are very well placed in regards to the heritage building and we have to protect that. One of the complaints that we had was that it was not a good angle.

Mr Cox: We can sit there and argue how to get the best positions, and the best positions would be at eye level. Obviously you cannot do that, so there is a compromise between both parties. I can sit in there with both parties and work out the angles without any problems. We have sort of done that and it can be achieved without too many issues.

Ms JONES: But at the end of the day it does not really affect mums who are sitting on the couch at home watching.

Mr Cox: If you are shooting a movie it is a whole different ball game. You would want it over a shoulder and you would want a bit of this and a bit of that. Generally you can get what is required from where they are. It needs to come down to what feeds you need. You have seven cameras in there, so with the digital technology you should be able to iso-record every camera. That was the other argument I made. By using a hard drive today you should be able to keep one camera forever—or whatever needs to happen—for viewing back. But you should be able to iso-record every single camera onto a hard drive and then it needs to be ticked off by whoever to say, yes, that can go or that can go. I never saw an issue with that. Why they do not want the media to have that is beyond me, because it does give them a lot more coverage to pick from. If I had seven cameras up there I would be using seven cameras to give them the best feed.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: And if you got all those feeds, you would be able to splice together something that looked pretty dynamic.

Mr Cox: I would be able to switch it live.

Mr NICHOLLS: Sorry, what does 'iso-record' mean?

Mr Cox: Each camera is isolated so you can record the vision like they do in football when they go back for a replay. Every single camera is recorded separately and then it is a live switch.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: How many do we record at the moment, the way it is operating?

Ms JONES: Two. So we would have to invest money into getting that stuff?

Mr Cox: I think it is just hard drive. That sort of thing is not expensive anymore. I shoot movies on hard drives and all my cameras are iso. Today a hard drive is just nothing. Either you recycle that, depending how long the media wants those pieces of footage, then you recycle the hard drives. Because they are in a solid state today, they last for forever.

Mr NICHOLLS: So they can then go back into those iso-records and cut their story out of that?

Mr Cox: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: And move straight from those seven feeds?

Mr Cox: The way technology is, each station should be able to iso-record their feeds. You should be able to provide the facilities here so that the stations can take the iso-record and not let Parliament House worry about that. Have a professional switcher switching an on-air feed that is recorded so they get the best of both worlds. They can either use the switch feed or they can then provide their hard drives for the day on each feed. That is not difficult to do. They can either come down here and patch into it or they can—I do not know technically what they have back at the stations, but that is not an issue.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: That could even be achieved, with the right investment, by having a live feed of all those things straight to them?

Mr Cox: Absolutely. It is just common ground these days to do that. It is quite simple.

Mrs PRATT: Would that impact on the amount of their staff actually working here?

Mr Cox: They should not need any staff working here.

Mrs PRATT: Could that be the problem?

Mr Cox: I can comment on what I think the problem is. I am an ex-media man—

Mrs PRATT: But that could be a result? If we have the equipment up to—

Mr Cox: Yes, it is up to standard. It is high definition and I think we are still working in standard def. But eventually people are going to want high def, which we are slowly going into. There are no problems with the actual gear, which is fantastic. No-one can tell you that it is not good enough.

Ms JONES: They ended up conceding that, actually.

Mr Cox: It is not a problem.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Can I just play devil's advocate here as I have a media background. Providing them with seven feeds and an on-air feed, that is eight feeds. Firstly, from our point of view, I think if you are giving them seven isolated feeds there is more chance of them getting the wrong shots to use. That is the fear I have with the seven isolated cameras, whether it is accidentally in the movement of a camera, the readjusting of a camera or that camera being on a member who had the call but then does not have the call anymore but the camera is still recording until it gets readjusted. That is the problem I see with that.

Mr Cox: Sure.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Plus, I also see the problem—which is their problem—that now they have two cameras to sort through, and you are going to give them basically seven and one live-to-air feed. That is eight feeds.

Mr Cox: Yes, it is a lot of feeds.

Mr BOMBOLAS: It is a lot of stuff for a one minute 20 story, and lack of material.

Mr Cox: That was the argument that was given to me, that they were not given enough feeds. I would want three feeds and it would be three feeds that are designated to the person speaking: two on that person and one for your reactions and cutaways, and then the live feed. Even though they are getting four feeds, it is still on that particular—

Mr COPELAND: One of them is a wide shot anyway, which would be one of the seven that they would only use sparingly.

Mr Cox: Yes.

Mr BOMBOLAS: That would be a shot that you would use either to show the fullness of parliament or if you have not got a shot. That is your filler shot, isn't it?

Mr Cox: It is all relative to what the story is. Even though you might set a wide shot, that does not mean that it is going to cut either. It might have to be a medium shot to cut with the close-up. It is a director's job to know that that is not going to work. It is about framing. With continuity for instance, which you do not really need in news, you might have the Speaker looking this way and all of a sudden the wide shot is overlapping the next shot and it will not cut. Those are some of the issues I know that the media would have. They would be just tearing their hair out. The editors would be wanting to hunt you down and kill you, but again an experienced person would know how to handle that and how to do it.

Mr BOMBOLAS: From a technical point of view the suggestion has been that we take the mixing out of that computer system where it is at the moment and have a separate mixing unit. Would that help with the joystick and the alignment of cameras as such?

Mr Cox: I would have a very small switcher and an A bus/B bus that you can dissolve if they want to dissolve it, and just be able to cut. And a preview bus. That is it. Very simple. Everything is cut.

Mr COPELAND: In English?

Mr Cox: Sorry. Basically in a switching situation it is this big. Each camera is fed into a particular switch. You might have 10 switches, cameras on 1, 2, 3—all the way. Separate to that you would have another switching box which gives you your preview. Before anything goes to air it goes through a preview bus. It is what they call a bus. That is a bus, along the top. Then it gets switched to air. Then you have another feed below, where you can put in an effect. It might be a wipe effect or something like that. It is a very, very simple switcher, but you cannot do that upstairs because it is all computerised. It is just too difficult. The director should be sitting here. He would have an operator there and an operator there. He would have his line monitors and all of that in front, which they see. It is the same thing.

Mr BOMBOLAS: So the two operators would operate the cameras; is that correct?

Mr Cox: You would need two operators, yes.

Mr BOMBOLAS: They would be lining up the cameras.

Mr Cox: And the director calls those shots. They are all numbered, just like a news camera. 'I want to go to here, give me that close-up, that's what I want here.' That director should be employed by parliament.

CHAIR: How much would it cost to employ that person?

Mr Cox: I'm not too expensive! I am not sure what television directors are a day. You might get one for 500 bucks a day. But that person should not come from the media side. It should be someone who is trained and knows the stuff that you have to get but also knows the limitations and the laws.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: To summarise, they would be someone who would know what the media would be looking for in terms of content—

Mr Cox: Exactly right.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: But would have the understanding and respect for the guidelines of parliament.

Mr Cox: That is exactly right. He controls the whole thing then. You have someone who is always a designated person who knows the issues. He needs to be on the side of parliament but still have the respect of the media and know what they want. That is not difficult. I could go in there now, switch in two minutes and give them a great coverage. From what I gather they wanted other stuff which was what concerned parliament: the yawning, going to sleep, the nod-offs. All that sort of stuff is just too much and needs to be cut out. That was the underlying issues that I got out of everything, and also the operation of those people.

Mr COPELAND: Have you spoken to the media gallery here about it all?

Mr Cox: I have spoken to Spence in great length. He worked for me on *A Current Affair* years ago when I was directing. I could not nut Spence out, unfortunately, but I could tell you exactly what his problems were. I had a long conversation with the Speaker. I am independent. I said to Spence, 'That's the law you got. That's what they are going to give you. You have to deal with it.' But I felt that parliament probably was not giving them enough for what they really wanted to make a decent looking story, and it is easy to fix.

Ms JONES: It is a rules issue.

Mr NICHOLLS: And a switching issue.

Mr Cox: Switching is really important.

Mr NICHOLLS: Switching is an important part.

Mr Cox: You basically need three people to make that operation work when parliament is sitting.

CHAIR: Just getting back to costs—say it costs \$500 a day for the director, what about the technical side, the switching—

Ms JONES: The cameramen.

Mr Cox: The operators there are probably okay. They just need to be told what to do.

CHAIR: We already have them or they can be the media camera people. What about the hardware?

Mr Cox: I am not sure what costs there would be for the hardware, but it does not seem to be very expensive. I do not know what the joystick is worth these days. But you would probably need two joysticks and you need to be able to switch any camera into those joysticks, and you would need a small switcher. They are not expensive.

Mr NICHOLLS: \$20,000 or \$10,000?

Mr Cox: Not even that.

Mr NICHOLLS: \$5,000?

Mr Cox: A switcher could be \$5,000. I can find all that out. That is pretty easy to do.

Mr NICHOLLS: We are not talking hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr Cox: No. It is a different world.

Mr NICHOLLS: Not even tens of thousands.

Mr Cox: It is not like the television days back then when it was hundreds and thousands of dollars. Now it is backyard stuff. Even what you have in there is over the top. You have brilliant stuff. It will last forever more. You really do not need to spend a lot of money. Really it comes back to the personnel being able to operate it and get what the media need more than anything, and that is not hard.

Mrs PRATT: A wise investment.

Mr BOMBOLAS: And a sense of the theatre.

Mr Cox: I think so, yes.

Mr BOMBOLAS: The entertainment value.

Mr Cox: That is exactly right. It is entertainment but knowing the law of it.

CHAIR: Did you ever look at things like the angles of the room and the lighting of the room?

Mr BOMBOLAS: There is the argument that at times, because of the sun near the Speaker's end, people standing may have dark shadows.

Mr Cox: You would need to go through it again. It never got to that stage. But, sure, I could go in there and tell you instantly if the lighting is a good, bad or indifferent. The general lighting in that room is perfect. I have shot a number of movies in there. I know what it does.

Mr BOMBOLAS: You might need to get a tungsten light or something like that at various times of the year when the sun is particularly harsh—

Mr Cox: The cheapest thing to do would be to black the window.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Or screen the windows from the outside.

Mr Cox: That way the light is constant. What will happen with the media is if you start playing with the actual lighting then when you do your cutaways and it goes to night your colour temperature changes—

Mr BOMBOLAS: Put a filter on the window.

Mr Cox: It could be a carpeted piece of timber that slips straight on the window or something like that. That is two minutes worth of discussion on the location—easy, nothing hard.

Mrs PRATT: Sounds good.

Mr Cox: It is not hard to fix.

Mrs PRATT: Sounds simple.

Mr Cox: I know it does.

Mr NICHOLLS: There is nothing further that you would suggest that we have not canvassed already to improve the system and you would regard it as being up to broadcast quality—

Mr Cox: Absolutely.

Mr NICHOLLS: —fit for use by TV stations.

Mr Cox: Absolutely. No problem. It is high definition which just needs to be converted to standard, which they do anywhere.

Mr NICHOLLS: So that is a downgrading.

Mr Cox: It is a downgrading. Those cameras are 1080p, which is the highest quality known to man basically at this point in time. So there is no problem with it. It is all simple. If it goes any further with angles, I just need to go in there for half an hour—not downstairs but up at the monitors—and go through them so everyone is happy with it. It is a compromise. That is all. You are not going to get it perfect, but you will be able to get the stories.

Mr BOMBOLAS: In relation to the suggestion that the room is long and narrow, you obviously have had to overcome that in your time.

Mr Cox: I find the room great to shoot in. I would shoot a movie here any day. I found that lighting wise, everything, it is perfect. I did not bring any lights in to shoot. I just put one back light in and that was it. If Jason lets me back in, I will always come back. I will keep on his good side.

Mr NICHOLLS: Were the movies successful?

Mr Cox: They have done pretty well. I am still in the business. I have a good one on parliamentarians coming up. They have done well.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, thank you very much for your time.

Mr Cox: Thank you. Any time.

LARSON, Mr Craig, Broadcast Technician, Queensland Television Ltd

CHAIR: Craig, I have quite a spiel here that they have prepared for me but I will cut it down a bit. I understand that in the letter we provided you with we outlined the terms of reference of the committee.

Mr Larson: Yes.

CHAIR: We are reporting on those terms of reference to the parliament by 30 May this year. I do not need to introduce my colleagues because they have done that themselves. But there is something I do need to say. This hearing is a formal proceeding of the parliament and it is subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. The committee will not require witnesses to give evidence under oath, but I remind you that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

Mr Larson: Certainly.

CHAIR: You will be aware from our correspondence that we understand that you worked closely with the parliament to ensure that the parliament's vision was of a good technical and visual standard. We would like to discuss this with you. But, before we do, would you like to make some opening remarks and tell us from your perspective about that vision and associated issues?

Mr Larson: In the very first instance there was a demonstration set up by Videopro from whom the parliament contracted to purchase the equipment and install it. Probably the first thing we realised was that, with setting the cameras in the high platform where they are and the parliamentary chamber being a heritage listed building, it was going to be almost impossible to control the varying light situation throughout the chamber. So different cameras were going to pick up different amounts of light.

The original cameras that were demonstrated to us were standard definition cameras. I think there was one or two of them set high in almost the position of one of the existing cameras now. As the camera was swung around and looked about the chamber, even though the frame picked up the information that was trying to be achieved, we noticed that there was a substantial amount of noise or grain within the picture. Videopro at that stage brought out a high definition version of the camera. Even though there was still some noise and grain in it, it was far superior to the standard definition with respect to the signal to noise ratio.

As you are probably all aware, with digital broadcasting we cannot go full bandwidth with anything. We have to compress. One of the comments I made was that noise is seen as detail and detail is the first thing that gets removed from a picture when you start to compress it. Therefore, the less noise we have in the original picture the more detail we have in the final picture. So, yes, there were some problems with the physical size constraints of the cameras themselves. Again, with the chamber being heritage listed, nobody wanted to dominate the whole chamber with a series of huge studio style cameras.

After that, we just had a brief discussion about how the system was going to work with Hansard et cetera and the fact that some broadcasters were ready for a serial digital signal, some were ready only for traditional analogue signals and those series of signals were then cabled in for distribution to the TV areas. So, from a technical quality point of view, I guess you could say it is broadcastable but it is certainly not broadcast quality. But in the first instance it was realised pretty much by everyone, I am hoping, that there was no way we were ever going to get a broadcast quality picture from tiny cameras in an environment where the lighting could not be sufficiently controlled—but broadcastable.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I have a question about the lighting issue. Is the issue that different cameras at the same time, in the same setting with daylight coming into the chamber, have a different look? So if you shoot from one side with the cameras that are there and then switch to the cameras on the other side the colours will look quite different. Is that the issue you are talking about?

Mr Larson: It is not so much the colours. The cameras are under an automatic control of IRIS and the subject more often than not would be a politician or a group of politicians. But where there was a window behind them and the sun was in a particular position, a high amount of light coming through that window would almost silhouette a politician, and the darker the picture went the more grain there would be in a picture—how a camera reacts. So the subject—that being the politicians—would be grainy and noisy, whereas with a manually operated camera, for instance, the cameraman uses IRIS to suit the subject and lets the background light go overexposed.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: So, if you had it so that the cameras were remotely operated to be able to control those aspects, would that progress that?

Mr Larson: It is possible. Auto IRIS can do a good job in a lot of cases. In extreme cases it can be very difficult because it will vary as the sun moves of a morning and during the day.

CHAIR: You would not classify that chamber as an extreme case, would you? You have a couple of windows but if you black those windows out you have the same lighting the whole time.

Mr Larson: At the time the thought of changing the windows et cetera was not contemplated. We pretty much had to deal with—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Were you told that that would not be permitted?

Mr Larson: Yes, not be permitted. We had to deal with the chamber—

CHAIR: So the lighting in that window changes that dramatically? The windows are set back into a building. There is a covered balcony outside. You never get direct sun on them, for example.

Mr Larson: Correct.

CHAIR: They change a bit. Would you call that extreme lighting change?

Mr Larson: I would not call it extreme lighting change but you are dealing with very sensitive sensors in the cameras, and I believe they are later technology cameras. We are used to CCD or charge coupled device cameras. I think you will find these cameras are CMOS, which are even more sensitive.

Mr COPELAND: So if those windows were permitted to be blacked out, that would essentially solve the problem with the light.

Mr Larson: Some of the problems, yes. In a studio environment the lighting is controlled a lot more than just blacking out windows. We would use key lights and fill lights and a whole gamut of different lights.

CHAIR: But only a small percentage of what goes to air in the news is done in a studio.

Mr Larson: Correct.

CHAIR: You shoot in all sorts of different ways.

Mr Larson: At the moment in the courtyard you will see a production crew of ours shooting a piece, and they have actually brought with them a lighting guy. Even though they are outside in the shade, they will have a lighting guy with reflector boards and all sorts of things. That gives you an idea how much light plays a part. Minuscule amounts of light can play a huge part in picture quality.

Mr COPELAND: In your opening statement, you said it is broadcastable but it is not broadcast quality.

Mr Larson: Certainly.

Mr COPELAND: What would need to be done to make it, in your view, broadcast quality?

Mr Larson: Firstly, we would have to be broadcasting parliament to make it financially viable. We are not actually broadcasting parliament on television from this site. We would pay anything up to \$250,000 per camera chain and then each camera requires more than one person to drive it in a studio environment. You would have the cameraman. He is only looking after framing and some elements and then there is someone else in the control room driving the IRIS and controlling the light and painting the colour as situations change.

Mr NICHOLLS: What we are trying to do is get a sense of what you mean by broadcast quality. We have heard a lot about what broadcast quality is. Do you mean being in an ideal environment where you can control lighting and angles and all those sorts of things? So in a studio, for example, you get broadcast quality because you can control those things?

Mr Larson: Correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: Then you must not be getting that already. You are not getting broadcast quality already from the two cameras you have there.

Mr Larson: Certainly not. It is broadcastable but it is not—

Mr NICHOLLS: It is broadcastable but it is not what you would say is ideal.

Mr Larson: It is not ideal.

Mr NICHOLLS: But currently with the two cameras that are fixed in positions that have to deal with the current vagaries of the light as it moves through the day you are getting a broadcastable picture but it is not the top quality picture that you would be able to achieve if you had complete control of your environment.

Mr Larson: Correct.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you.

Mr Larson: Broadcast quality is a very loose term.

Ms JONES: It gets bandied around.

Mr NICHOLLS: So it can vary a bit. But that is what you understand it to mean.

Mr Larson: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: But what you are getting from your current cameras is a completely acceptable quality to broadcast as part of a news service.

Mr Larson: Certainly.

Mr NICHOLLS: And is what you have observed from the fixed cameras of adequate quality to be broadcast as part of a news bulletin?

Mr Larson: From a picture quality perspective, we broadcast stuff that has been shot on a mobile phone, so I would have to answer yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is okay. That is fine. It is better than what you would see on a mobile phone.

Mr Larson: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is better than Tim Nicholls with a handycam, believe me!

Mr BOMBOLAS: While the link may not be perfect, is the picture still of a quality that you would put to air? You have experienced that with your Nine commitments, where the link is not right up to 100 per cent but you can still put the picture to air. Is what comes out of our cameras, as it stands with the system now, able to be broadcast? I am not talking about framing or anything like that; I am talking merely from a technical point of view.

Mr Larson: From a technical quality point of view, there is no reason why it would not be broadcast.

Mr BOMBOLAS: So from a quality point of view, if you were sitting in the vision switcher's spot you would not say, 'I can't put that to air, it's just not acceptable'?

Mr Larson: No, correct. There is no way that I could say that, given what goes to air as part of a news service.

Mr BOMBOLAS: Yes. We know there are extreme circumstances, but from a technical point of view you could just give it the tick and say that that can go to air, we can stick with that?

Mr Larson: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Larson, if you were asked to suggest any improvements to the system, what would they be?

Mr Larson: I would really have to do some research, looking into what cameras are available, types of control. You would have to sit in the chamber through a summer's day and through a winter's day with a light meter to try to find an IRIS point to set those cameras at or reduce the automatics to work within certain ranges.

Mr NICHOLLS: There are eight cameras in the chamber. Would repositioning some of those cameras enhance the shots that are there or are they in satisfactory locations?

Mr Larson: I do not believe so. I think they are in a satisfactory location to cover the parliament.

Mr NICHOLLS: The stuff that needs to be covered.

Mr Larson: The stuff that was the objective initially, to cover the speakers.

Mr NICHOLLS: What if there was some degree of involvement in the control of the cameras from the quality control room? At the moment I think they press a button and the camera zeroes in on the position of the member for Yeerongpilly and it zeroes in on him after three or four seconds, or something like that. If there was a faster reaction time that was controlled by someone who had the skills there, is that an issue?

Mr Larson: That is a production quality issue. I have experienced it because I have been around it for so long, but it is not an area of my expertise.

Mr NICHOLLS: Okay, that is fine. Thank you.

Mr BOMBOLAS: So the No. 1 problem is the variance of lighting, at this stage, which puts the person who is on their feet perhaps in less quality than it could be?

Mr Larson: I do not see that as a huge problem. That is nothing that the system as it stands should not be able to overcome. It is just a matter of setting the system up. I believe the cameras have a wide range of different functionality that is remoteable. Be aware, though, that during the course of the year from the summer to the winter some of those things will change and will need to be adjusted.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: They will change every day.

Mr Larson: And can change every day. If you have a storm over the top its probably even better as no extraneous light makes it more even through the room.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: We would all like more rain!

Mr NICHOLLS: And the quality of the cameras is up to speed and all those sorts of things?

Mr Larson: They are very remarkable for their physical size. You get a remarkable quality out of the camera.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Larson, for coming in. We appreciate it.

Mr Larson: Thank you very much.

Committee adjourned at 2 pm