



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES 2022

Mr Jeremy Hanson CSC MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Petterson MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into possible contempt of the Assembly:
Imposition of prohibition notice by WorkSafe ACT

Submission Number: 4.4

Date Authorised for Publication: 31 October 2022



Speaker

Mr Jeremy Hanson CSC
Chair, Select Committee on Privileges
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO BOX 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: LCommitteePrivileges2022@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Hanson

On 25 October 2022, the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Mick Gentleman MLA, appeared before the select committee on privileges and in response to questions from Ms Jo Clay MLA, regarding a media interview the Minister had participated in on 17 August 2022, the Minister stated words to the effect that "...I understand the committee and the speaker had put out media releases in days prior to that interview and that journalists may have been backgrounded regarding these matters so this generated media interest. I answered questions regarding what had already been put into the public domain by the committee and the speaker". The Minister further went on to state words to the effect that "...well as I said, the statements to the press were raised by the journalist and my understanding to this is that this is because the speaker and the committee had put forward media releases and backgrounded journalists prior to that".

I wish to place on record the facts around this statement. There was no backgrounding of the media from myself and my office. Rather, on 17 August 2022, Minister Gentleman appeared on ABC morning radio and spoke with Adam Shirley about the matters which were underfoot and stated he had concerns around the notion of 40 officials required to be present in one room. Following this interview and for the purpose of correcting misinformation, I spoke with the Clerk and it was agreed to issue the attached statement. I felt it was necessary to be very clear that the Assembly had indeed had a COVID-19 safety plan in place for some time, inclusive of room limits, and that as Speaker, I took the safety of those entering the precincts with utmost importance.

My media statement was issued at 1.01pm on the 17th of August. Mornings with Adam Shirley runs from 8.30am-11am. Over the course of this matter, my office has received numerous requests for media, I have declined to speak publicly at all times and the issuing of this one media statement has been the only public statement I have made concerning this issue. I unequivocally refute the suggestion I backgrounded the media or had provided commentary prior.

In light of the Ministers evidence and the suggestion that his commentary on radio was on the basis of media backgrounding or earlier statements by myself, I think it is important that I provide the committee with a response to these claims. I have attached a copy of my media release with the time of distribution evident.

Regards,

Joy Burch MLA
Speaker
26 October 2022

Gonczarek, Melinda

From: Speaker
Sent: Wednesday, 17 August 2022 1:01 PM
To: Speaker
Subject: Speakers Media Release - COVID Safety at the Legislative Assembly



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Office of the Speaker – Media Release

COVID-Safety at the Legislative Assembly

It has come to the attention of the Speaker and the Clerk of the ACT Legislative Assembly, that some media outlets are incorrectly reporting that the Assembly does not have a COVID safety plan in place. This is unequivocally and factually incorrect.

The Assembly has in place a COVID-19 safety Plan which includes a comprehensive risk register. The COVID-safe plan has been in place since June 2020 and all risk control measures are implemented as per this plan, inclusive of appropriate numbers of persons per spaces in the Assembly based on ACT health COVID guidelines. The plan is regularly reviewed and updated by both the Legislative Assembly Work Health and Safety Committee and the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure.

The Assembly's Work Health and Safety Committee, which is established as the consultative and communicative forum responsible for overseeing the requirements of the WHS Act as they relate to the Legislative Assembly and the Office of the Legislative Assembly, are an effective and engaged committee. The WHS committee meets quarterly, and the COVID safe plan is a standing agenda item.

The Assembly has a Legislative Assembly Work Health and Safety Risk Register which contains all work health and safety risks identified by the WHS Committee in connection with the Assembly workplace.

Late last year the Office of the Legislative Assembly participated in the ACT Government **COVID-19 Assurance Program** and received an assessment report confirming the Assembly met the requirements of the program and had tailored responses in place that aligned with ACT Whole of Government policies.

Both the Speaker and the Clerk of the Assembly take COVID safety very seriously and have provided COVID-safe updates to all members and staff of the Legislative Assembly regularly throughout the pandemic. All COVID-safe measures will continue and as has been the practice since 2020, all necessary efforts will be taken to ensure the safety of members and staff in the Assembly.

Statement End