

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON CARETAKER CONVENTIONS  
FURTHER WRITTEN SUBMISSION**

**Sharee Minnikin-Smith**

**1. Purpose of my submission**

I appeared before the House of Assembly Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions on 31 July 2026. Following the expansion of the Committee's Terms of Reference, I was subsequently invited to provide further evidence concerning my experiences during my employment in Ministerial and Parliamentary Services.

I welcome that opportunity and the purpose of this submission is to provide further information and documentary evidence about my employment arrangements, the duties I was undertaking during the 2024 election period, and the nature of my working relationship with Ms Jane Howlett.

I also wish to respond to aspects of the evidence given by Ms Howlett to the Committee on 14 August 2026 concerning my role and the suggestion that the work I undertook in connection with her was voluntary Liberal Party activity.

I acknowledge that I was a member of the Liberal Party and that I did undertake some genuine voluntary activities. I do not dispute that.

However, I respectfully disagree with any suggestion that this explains the work I was performing for Ms Howlett while I was employed and paid through Ministerial and Parliamentary Services.

Rather than asking the Committee to choose between differing recollections, I have provided text messages and other records from the time so the Committee can consider what was occurring as the events unfolded.

**2. My appointment to Parliamentary Services**

I commenced employment on 13 November 2023 as Adviser, Office of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council.

My appointment in that position continued until 10 April 2024. On 11 April 2024, I formally commenced a new appointment as Adviser in the Office of the Honourable Jane Howlett MP. I previously provided these dates and titles to the Committee in response to Questions on Notice.

One aspect of my original appointment requires further clarification.

I did not apply for the position through an advertised competitive recruitment process. I recall Ms Howlett approaching me to take up a parliamentary position associated with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Legislative Council.

I accepted that opportunity in good faith. However, I did not clearly understand the position description, reporting structure, or boundaries of my duties. As the weeks progressed, I raised questions about my position because I wanted clarification about my responsibilities and wanted to perform my job properly.

Looking back at the documentary evidence, I believe the Committee should consider: what was the intended purpose and reporting structure of my appointment, and how did that compare with the work I was directed to perform?

### **3. What occurred in practice**

The text messages exchanged at the time are important because they record what was happening during my employment. They show regular communication between Ms Howlett and me concerning work I was undertaking. These communications include diary and appointment management, stakeholder contact, meetings, media contacts, social-media material, events, community organisations and other administrative tasks.

One exchange is particularly important to me.

*“Please correct me when you need to, so I want to make sure I do my job well x”*

Ms Howlett responded by apologising for being hard on me and telling me that this was a “different level to secretariat”, that a high level of professionalism was important, and that I was learning and doing a great job. I do not suggest that this single exchange determines who my formal employer was. My employment records establish my formal appointment.

I believe, however, that this exchange and the broader sequence of messages are relevant to determining the practical working relationship that existed.

I was referring to doing “my job” properly. Ms Howlett responded by discussing the professional standard expected of me, my learning and my performance.

This was not an isolated exchange. Messages from that period show repeated requests and directions about the work I was undertaking.

#### **4. Evidence given by Ms Howlett on 14 August 2026**

I have listened carefully to the evidence given by Ms Howlett to the Committee on 14 August.

When asked about my evidence that I was working for her, Ms Howlett repeatedly stated that I “did not work for” her and that I was employed by Ministerial and Parliamentary Services. She nevertheless acknowledged that she communicated with me “regularly”. Ms Howlett described me as a Liberal Party member who volunteered her services in Lyons and referred to my involvement with the Party. When the Chair asked whether the campaigning work I undertook during the 2024 caretaker period was undertaken as a volunteer or Liberal Party member, Ms Howlett stated that the Party managed the campaign work and that she did not manage Party volunteers. Later, when Mr Winter asked whether my involvement was “as a volunteer only”, Ms Howlett responded that I did volunteer work for the Party, herself and other members across Lyons. I agree that I undertook some voluntary Liberal Party activity. What I respectfully ask the Committee to examine is whether all the work reflected in the records from this period can reasonably be characterised in that way. I believe it is important to distinguish between voluntary political activity I undertook as a Party member and duties I performed while employed and paid through Ministerial and Parliamentary Services.

#### **5. Parliamentary work and campaigning**

The messages show that as the 2024 election campaign progressed, ordinary work-related activities and campaign-related activities increasingly occurred alongside each other.

Among the messages I have retained is an exchange in which Ms Howlett wrote:

*“27 days left of campaign”*

followed by:

*“We have to do everything to keep our jobs x.”*

I provide this message as evidence of the circumstances in which I was working. I am not asking the Committee to speculate about what Ms Howlett intended by those words.

The broader messages include discussions about door-knocking, social-media posts, community organisations, visits, photographs and other activities occurring during the campaign period.

The question I believe requires examination is not whether I ever volunteered. I did.

The question is whether I undertook or directed campaign-related work during my paid parliamentary employment, and whether appropriate boundaries existed between those activities. I

can provide further information, if required, about the days and weeks during which I travelled throughout the Lyons electorate while undertaking these duties.

## **6. The Tasman material and 22 March 2024 email**

I also wish to clarify the circumstances surrounding the Tasman material and the email sent from my Parliamentary email account on 22 March 2024. I no longer have access to that Government email account and therefore cannot independently confirm the precise sending time. In my response to the Committee's Questions on Notice, I advised that Mr Winter had referred during my hearing to the previous parliamentary record recording the email as having been sent at 9.03 pm on 22 March 2024. I also provided the Committee with a text message I sent Ms Howlett at 8.45 pm on 22 March 2024, stating:

*“I have done Tasman and it has gone from my parliament email. How do I change it?”*

I believe the entire sequence of communications from 21 and 22 March should be considered together.

There are also two separate questions that I believe should not be confused:

- First, who asked or directed me to prepare and distribute the Tasman material?
- Second, how did that material come to be sent from my Parliamentary email account?

During Ms Howlett's 14 August evidence, Mr Winter specifically asked whether she had asked me to send the material. The exchange then returned to the time and email account used.

I respectfully ask the Committee, if possible, to obtain and examine the original email, recipients, attachments and any associated records together with the text-message sequence.

## **7. Clarification of my original appointment**

This evidence has raised genuine questions about the circumstances of my original appointment.

I respectfully ask whether the Committee can establish:

1. Who initiated and authorised my appointment to Parliamentary Services in November 2023?
2. What position description or statement of duties applied to me?
3. Who was I formally required to report to?
4. Who had authority to direct my day-to-day work?

5. What was the intended purpose of my appointment within the Office of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council?
6. If I was appointed to that office, on what basis was I undertaking substantial work at the direction of Ms Howlett before my formal appointment to her office on 11 April 2024?
7. Were the campaign-related activities I was directed or expected to undertake consistent with the position for which I was being paid through Ministerial and Parliamentary Services?
8. Are there appointment records, emails, approvals or other documents that explain how this employment arrangement was established and intended to operate?

I am not asking the Committee to speculate about anyone's motives. I am asking for clarity about the purpose of my appointment and the work I was expected to perform. I found this process difficult.

I tried extremely hard to perform my role professionally. I asked questions, sought guidance and wanted to do my job well. It is therefore deeply distressing to now hear my role described in a way that, in my view, does not reflect the work I was performing at the time.

I have found myself questioning why I was appointed under one arrangement while apparently being directed to perform substantial work for another person. The lack of clarity surrounding that has been upsetting and, at times, humiliating.

I do not include this because I am seeking sympathy from the Committee. I include it because parliamentary employees should be entitled to understand who they work for, what they are employed to do, who can direct their work, and where the boundary lies between their paid employment and political campaigning.

## **8. Conclusion**

I have carefully considered providing further evidence. My purpose is not to attack Ms Howlett or any other individual. Nor do I ask the Committee to accept my recollection simply because it differs from another witness's evidence. I ask the Committee to examine the records. My formal employment documents show where I was appointed and paid. The text messages and other communications from the time provide evidence of the work I was undertaking and the directions and requests I was receiving. I respectfully ask that you consider these records together. I hope my evidence helps the Committee establish what occurred and consider whether clearer employment arrangements, reporting structures, and safeguards are required to maintain an appropriate separation between taxpayer-funded parliamentary employment and political campaigning.

I am willing to provide any further documentation or clarification the Committee requests and, if the Committee considers it helpful, I am willing to appear again to answer further questions.

Yours sincerely,

**Sharee Minnikin-Smith**

24 August 2026

## Chronology of Text Messages and Employment Evidence

### Sharee Minnikin-Smith – Parliamentary employment/directions from Ms Jane Howlett

Chronology of text messages in the same time frames relating to the 2024 election supplied by Sharee Minnikin-Smith. It distinguishes direct instructions from Ms Howlett about work being performed and campaign-related material.

| Date                 | Text message / contemporaneous evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Potential relevance                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 Nov 2023, 7:00 am | Ms Howlett: "Did your computer work at Sorell x"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Evidence of my computer set-up at/for the (former) Office of Jane Howlett MLC, Sorell                                                                                           |
| 16 Nov 2023, 9:37 am | Ms Howlett: "Many more to go?"<br>Sharee: "Heaps I will do some more late this arvo when I finish doing work for the Leader".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Direct instructions to prepare database/invitations for the Southern Midlands Regional Cabinet.                                                                                 |
| Nov 2023             | Ms Howlett: "Can you access my diary?"<br>Sharee: "No I don't know how to access it".<br>Ms Howlett: "Call IT and ask them to set it up for you".<br>Sharee: "IT said you need to send the help desk a request for me to access it and if you want me to also add to it".<br>Ms Howlett: "Emailing them now".<br><br>Ms Howlett: "You're capturing only Southern Midlands Council? For Regional? Cabinet".<br><br>Ms Howlett: "Perfect if you can call them and ask for names and emails". | Direct instruction to access the (former) Hon Jane Howlett MLC diary.<br><br>Evidence of instructions for database/invitations for the Southern Midlands Regional Cabinet list. |
| Nov 2023             | Ms Howlett: "Your probably having your first normal day at work today, did u drop the kids off?"<br><br>Ms Howlett: "Can you access my emails".<br>Sharee: "Yes".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Evidence of working at/for the (former) Office of Jane Howlett MLC, Sorell.                                                                                                     |
| 23 Nov, 2023 2:36 pm | Ms Howlett: "May need to schedule to January".                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Direct instructions to schedule a meeting.                                                                                                                                      |
| Nov 2023             | Ms Howlett: "Hi there, I'm just pulling the final agenda together. On Monday night 5.30 pm to 7.00 pm and then the private dinner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Evidence of working at/for the (former) Office of Jane Howlett MLC, Sorell on direct instructions for Southern Midlands Regional                                                |

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|                                                | <p>afterwards. On Tuesday 12.15pm media conference and then 1pm to 2.30 pm for Joint Regional Cabinet meeting – final agenda and briefing material to you shortly”.</p> <p>Ms Howlett: “From Carol we can’t organise anything for Tuesday as we have stuff on in Oatlands’s”.</p>                                                                                                                                      | Cabinet agenda.                                                                                                                                  |
| Late Dec 2023 (date not visible in screenshot) | <p>Ms Howlett: “If you could do a post with these 3 schools this afternoon that would be great and Johnny will do a post tomorrow.”</p> <p>Sharee: “I am walking over now. Just loaded the boxes in the car.”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Direct instruction to prepare/publish social-media material; contemporaneous work activity.                                                      |
| 21 Dec 2023, 7:49 am                           | Sharee: “On my way to work I am going to make an early start before I head to Swansea at 11:30am.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Contemporaneous reference to attending work and undertaking scheduled duties.                                                                    |
| 4 Jan 2024, 6:08 pm                            | <p>Ms Howlett: “Are you ok?”</p> <p>Sharee: “Yes just putting up Facebook post and then leaving the office.” Sharee later asks: “Are you happy with this?” Ms Howlett responds with a thumbs-up.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Evidence of after-hours social-media work from the office and seeking approval for work product.                                                 |
| Early Jan 2024 (date not visible)              | <p>Ms Howlett corrects wording and protocol, including that Jo should be addressed as “Minister Palmer.” Sharee replies: “please correct me when you need I so want to make sure I do my job well x.” Ms Howlett: “Apologies for being hard on you but this is a different level to secretariat, a high level of professionalism is really important. Your learning and doing a great job, you will be amazing x.”</p> | Potentially significant supervisor-like exchange: Sharee expressly refers to “my job”; Ms Howlett discusses standards, learning and performance. |
| 12 Jan 2024, 10:03 am                          | Ms Howlett: “Please call Simon and arrange for a meeting in Feb. Talk to him and invite him to regional cabinet.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Direct instruction to contact a stakeholder and arrange/invite to an official event.                                                             |
| Mid-Jan 2024 (before 18 Jan)                   | Ms Howlett: “Could you please share my post later.” Sharee: “Will do x.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Direct social-media instruction.                                                                                                                 |
| Late Jan 2024 (before 24 Jan)                  | <p>Ms Howlett: “It’s important for you and Johnny to have a forward planning meeting, at the beginning of the month look at the entire month. Also really important to lock in door knocking days.” Sharee discusses attending an awards ceremony to</p>                                                                                                                                                               | Planning direction linking monthly forward planning with door-knocking; also direction/approval for representation at an event.                  |

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|                                                     | represent Ms Howlett; Ms Howlett says it would be good for her to go.                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                   |
| 26 Jan 2024, 8:13 am                                | Ms Howlett asks Sharee to call Patrick from the media office, obtain ABC and Southern Cross contact details, and pass details to Liam. Sharee reports Patrick did not answer and she sent him a message. | Direct instruction involving media contacts and liaison.                                                          |
| 2 Feb 2024, 3:36 pm                                 | A message forwarded to Ms Howlett confirms Patrick Barrie can attend a Swansea function. Subsequent messages on 3 Feb show Sharee and Ms Howlett coordinating at the bakery.                             | Stakeholder/event coordination.                                                                                   |
| 13 Feb 2024, 5:08 pm                                | Ms Howlett: "Can you call Marks Nicole and see when I'm meeting him tomorrow." Sharee reports she is waiting to hear back.                                                                               | Direct diary/meeting coordination instruction.                                                                    |
| 14 Feb 2024, 8:59 am                                | Sharee: "would you like me to get you a takeaway coffee"                                                                                                                                                 | Context showing day-to-day working relationship; not relied upon as proof of formal duties.                       |
| 18 Feb 2024, 7:08 pm                                | Ms Howlett asks whether Sharee is meeting her at Brighton bakery at 8:15 the next morning; Sharee confirms.                                                                                              | Work scheduling/coordination.                                                                                     |
| 20 Feb 2024, 11:23 am                               | Ms Howlett asks Sharee to call Melissa regarding an attached matter, and asks Sharee to change an appointment to 9 am Thursday or otherwise the following week. Sharee: "Will do."                       | Direct instruction to make calls and alter diary/appointment arrangements.                                        |
| 20 Feb 2024, 2:19 pm                                | Ms Howlett: "Can you both please focus3 on getting..." (remainder not visible).                                                                                                                          | Campaign/employment context. The screenshot is incomplete, so no conclusion is drawn from the unfinished message. |
| 23 Feb 2024, 3:52 pm                                | Sharee: "I missed a call from Mark." Ms Howlett: "Unfortunately they get political in a campaign." Later Ms Howlett sends an image and says "Shake it off."                                              | Explicit campaign context.                                                                                        |
| Late Feb 2024 (immediately before 26 Feb timestamp) | Ms Howlett: "27 days left of campaign" and "We have to do everything to keep our jobs x."                                                                                                                | Important contemporaneous statement explicitly linking campaign activity and job security.                        |
| 26 Feb 2024, 8:06 pm                                | A visit is confirmed for Thursday at 10 am at Greenbanks Road, Bridgewater. Ms Howlett: "Please send to Anthony Tomorrow."                                                                               | Direct instruction to forward visit details.                                                                      |
| 27 Feb 2024, 3:03 pm and later                      | Ms Howlett sends a contact card and asks Sharee to send details to an email; later: "Please put                                                                                                          | Diary/administrative instruction and direct request to organise                                                   |

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|                               | these details in your diary so I don't lose it" and "Can you please get some people to share pool post x."                                                                                                                                                            | sharing of social-media content.                                                                        |
| 1 Mar 2024, 9:07 pm           | Ms Howlett sends two screenshots and asks: "Can you please share".                                                                                                                                                                                                    | After-hours social-media direction.                                                                     |
| 2 Mar 2024, 5:56 pm / 8:02 pm | Ms Howlett: "Don't post Brighton until we speak later x." Later: "Can you please tag Brighton Robbin's football club in post that went up" followed by "Done."                                                                                                        | Direct editorial control/instruction over timing and tagging of a post.                                 |
| 5 Mar 2024, 1:15–2:19 pm      | Sharee: "In Carol's office about to put through a couple of Tasman's PDF's." Later: "I am leaving Exec building I will head to Sorell. I can do Submissions in between time."                                                                                         | Contemporaneous evidence of parliamentary-office work, documents/submissions and travel between duties. |
| 10 Mar 2024, 2:22 pm          | Ms Howlett sends "Lyons Community Projects - FINAL.pdf".                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Work-related document exchange.                                                                         |
| 11 Mar 2024, 9:29 am          | Ms Howlett asks Sharee to obtain a contact for Campania football and cricket club because she may try to get a photo with them. Sharee searches the database/Facebook; Ms Howlett directs her to call Eric at the Campania pub and advise of a Wednesday-night visit. | Direct stakeholder research/contact and campaign/community-photo coordination.                          |
| 12 Mar 2024, 8:59 am          | Ms Howlett: "When you finish meeting can u call Tom Darke see where we pick up David Foster from etc tomorrow".                                                                                                                                                       | Direct logistical instruction around meetings/travel.                                                   |
| 18 Mar 2024, 8:28 pm          | A message confirms a meeting with Adam at Firewood to U. Ms Howlett: "Please pop in our diary." Sharee: "Will do :)"                                                                                                                                                  | Direct diary-management instruction.                                                                    |
| 20 Mar 2024, 3:58 pm          | Ms Howlett sends Dan Bryan contact card. Sharee discusses missing Dodges Ferry player photos and asks whether to post the football photo for a scoreboard grant. Ms Howlett: "Yes please" and "Please tag club."                                                      | Direct approval and instruction concerning community/sporting-club social-media content.                |
| 21 Mar 2024, 10:16 am         | Sharee asks where Ms Howlett wants her to go and says she will take a call while driving. Ms Howlett directs her to park at the pub car park and says she is waiting in the car.                                                                                      | Day-to-day direction and coordination.                                                                  |
| 21 Mar 2024, 12:06 pm         | Ms Howlett sends "Jane Howlett - Fundraising Statement..." PDF.                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Work/campaign document exchange.                                                                        |

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| 21 Mar 2024, 10:00 pm                                             | Sharee: "I emailed you a test run of the LGA Newsletter for Tasman Region..." and discusses material supplied by Matt.                                                             | Contemporaneous evidence of Sharee preparing communications/newsletter material.                                                                      |
| 22 Mar 2024 (from previously identified contemporaneous evidence) | Sharee reportedly texted at 8:45 pm: "I have done Tasman and it has gone from my parliament email. How do I change it?" A government-email message was reportedly sent at 9:03 pm. | Key evidence requiring comparison with the original email/documentary record regarding use of a parliamentary/government email for campaign material. |

### Employment framework to place beside the messages

- 13 November 2023 – 10 April 2024: formal appointment as Adviser, Office of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council (Leonie Hiscutt MLC).
- 11 April 2024 – 2 July 2024: formal appointment as Adviser in Jane Howlett's office.
- The central issue for clarification is the relationship between the formal appointment/reporting structure and the substantial work that the contemporaneous messages show Ms Howlett directing before 11 April 2024.
- Questions for documentary verification include: who initiated and authorised the appointment; the applicable position description; formal reporting line; who had authority to direct day-to-day work; and whether campaign-related duties were consistent with the role.