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THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON CARETAKER CONVENTIONS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON FRIDAY 31 JULY 2026.

The Committee met at 10.31 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Badger) - Welcome to today's hearing of the House of Assembly Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions. Thank you for your attendance. We've got myself, Ms Badger as Chair, Mr Winter, Deputy Chair, Mr Vermey, and online we have Mr Garland joining us as well. If you could please state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing before the Committee.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Hi, I'm Sharee Minnikin-Smith, and I'm here as a witness today.

CHAIR - Thank you. Can I please confirm that you have received and read the guide that was sent to you by the Committee Secretary?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, I have.

CHAIR - Thank you. I just wanted to let you know that this hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament. This protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by yourself outside of parliamentary proceedings. This hearing is public. The public and media may be present. Should you wish for aspects of your evidence to be heard in private, please make this request to the Committee at the time. Could you please take the statutory declaration, which is there in front of you?

Ms SHAREE ANN MINNIKIN-SMITH WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you. Before we formally commence, thank you very much for sending in a brief overview of your evidence and what you'll be hearing before the Committee today. We do note that that extends to caretaker periods that are outside of 2025, and it was the view of Committee Members that there are some things within those that may be relevant to the considerations and deliberations of this Committee, but we do remind Members and the witness to ensure that all questions and evidence that is provided is relevant to the caretaker conventions. Do you have a short opening statement that you might wish to make?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I do, thank you.

Good morning, Chair and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Sharee Minnikin-Smith. I am here to assist the Committee by sharing my experience as an employee of Parliamentary Services. My evidence relates to the duties I was directed to perform during my employment, including matters that I understand are relevant to the Committee's consideration of the caretaker conventions.

To help explain those events, I will also briefly outline some of my experiences during the period and their impact on me personally. While some of these experiences are not matters for the Committee to determine, I believe they provide important context for understanding the circumstances in which the events relevant to this inquiry occurred and their impact on me. Before joining Parliamentary Services, I was recovering from breast cancer. As a result of my diagnosis, I was forced to close the hairdressing business I had owned and operated for 20 years. Losing my business was devastating, but I was determined not to let cancer define the rest of my life. As part of my rehabilitation, I commenced a Bachelor of Counselling to rebuild my confidence, return to meaningful work and continue contributing to my community.

My introduction to political employment began when Jane Howlett encouraged me to apply for the Membership Engagement Officer position with the Liberal Party. I successfully obtained that role and enjoyed the work.

Sometime later, I understand, that Jane requested that I work on her election campaign. However, the Party Director declined the request. A few months later, Jane approached me about accepting a position within Parliamentary Services. I accepted in good faith because I believed I had been given an opportunity to serve the Tasmanian community through public service and to use the knowledge, skills and relationships I had developed over many years of living and working in Tasmania.

I was initially appointed to the Office of Leonie Hiscutt MLC. I worked with Ms Hiscutt for approximately two weeks undertaking duties within the Legislative Council while Parliament was sitting. During that time, however, I was directed by Jane Howlett to undertake campaign-related work on her behalf. I was subsequently transferred into Ms Howlett's Office as her parliamentary adviser, where I expected to undertake the professional responsibilities associated with that role. However, after commencing in that position, my experience was very different from what I anticipated. Rather than primarily performing the duties of a parliamentary adviser, I found myself continuing to undertake campaign-related work. Over time, I began to feel that I had been employed for a purpose different from the role I believed I had accepted.

One incident that particularly stands out occurred during the 2024 election campaign, when I was directed to use my Government email account to distribute political campaign material. That is one of the matters I understand is relevant to this Committee's Inquiry.

At the same time, I was still managing the ongoing effects of breast-cancer treatment, including lymphoedema, for which I had been issued with a disability parking permit. On one occasion, I recall being told that it would be embarrassing if I parked in a disability parking space. While that comment may appear insignificant on its own, it had a profound effect on me at the time. I was still learning to accept the lasting physical effects of cancer treatment and it left me feeling that I should be ashamed of a disability that I know that I had no control over. For me, it reinforced the feeling that my health condition was something to hide rather than something that should be accommodated.

Throughout my employment, I experienced significant workplace pressure, while also trying to recover from serious health issues. There were also comments and interactions that affected my confidence and self-esteem. Looking back now, I realise how much I was seeking acceptance. That was completely out of character for me. Before this employment, owning and operating a successful business for 20 years, I had always considered myself confident and

independent. It is difficult to acknowledge how much my confidence changed during this period, but I believe it helps explain the impact that workplace had on me.

As my employment progressed, I reached a point where I no longer believed I could continue working in Ms Howlett's Office. I made it clear that I was willing to continue working within Parliamentary Services and would have welcomed the opportunity to work for another Member of Parliament. My concern was not with Parliamentary Services itself, but with the fact that I no longer believed I could continue working in Ms Howlett's Office. I was not seeking to leave Parliamentary Services altogether. Instead, I was advised to resign from my position. Ultimately, my employment with Parliamentary Services was terminated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

By the end of my employment, I no longer recognised the confident, capable person I had worked so hard to become after cancer. Instead of helping me rebuild my confidence through meaningful public service, the experience left me questioning my own abilities, my self-worth and the future I had been working towards. At that time, I was also recovering from a serious workplace injury in which I had broken my arm. The combination of my physical injuries, my previous cancer treatment and the circumstances surrounding the end of my employment had a significant impact on me.

Following the termination of my employment, I lodged an application with TASCAT concerning my treatment. Those proceedings occurred during the 2025 election campaign and were ultimately discontinued for reasons I have previously explained. However, they demonstrate that my concerns were raised well before the matters now being considered publicly.

I have thought very carefully about whether to come forward. This has not been an easy decision. I'm not here to attack any individual. I'm here because I believe parliamentary employees should be able to perform the role they are employed to do, be treated with dignity and respect, and have confidence that appropriate boundaries exist between parliamentary responsibilities and political campaigning. I also believe the Tasmanian public should have confidence that parliamentary resources, employment practices and workplace standards are upheld with integrity, transparency and accountability. It is my sincere hope that by sharing my experience the Committee can better understand what occurred and can consider whether improvements can be made to strengthen governance and protect those who work with Parliamentary Services in the future. Thank you. I'm happy to answer the Committee's questions.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for that outline, and I do note that it takes a lot of courage to stand before a Committee, so thank you for sharing that. There are certainly many aspects of that that are concerning and fall outside of the scope of the Committee, but we can definitely help afterwards in terms of recommending some courses of action.

Just to begin with, to help us understand in relation to the employment that you had and who with, at certain times, as they would relate to different caretaker periods, could you outline for us the dates that you were employed for Ms Hiscutt MLC, and then Ms Howlett as the second employer?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, sure. My instrument of appointment was with Leonie Hiscutt. I was a little bit confused with the instrument of appointment because I had been, like

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I said, approached by Jane Howlett and she told me that I'd be applying for the position of the parliamentary adviser to the Leader of the Legislative Council, being Leonie Hiscutt, and the Deputy Leader of the Legislative Council at the time, which was Jane Howlett.

Ms BADGER - So just to confirm, you were appointed as adviser to Ms Hiscutt -

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Ms BADGER - and what dates do you recall was that appointment?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It was early November. 13 November 2023.

Ms BADGER - Thank you. When did that appointment conclude? If you have that readily available.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, that was -

Mr WINTER - If you want to take that on notice, if that's an easier option for you.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, if you don't mind. It was 2024.

Ms BADGER - Absolutely. We will take on notice, just for the record of the hearing, the dates that you're employed for Ms Hiscutt and that exact position title, and then the dates under Ms Howlett and that exact title. So you mentioned within your opening statement that you were directed to use your Government email account for political material; could you please expand on that situation and when you recall that occurring?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - So that was for the 2024 election. It was a day before the election was announced - or not, sorry, the day before, and Jane had asked me to send off an email to the Tasman Peninsula for her campaigning, and I said that I didn't have confirmation from media to do that, and she then instructed me to do it anyway.

Ms BADGER - Just to get a little bit more detail: do you recall, when you say that you were instructed to send an email to the Tasman Peninsula, who is that to, specifically? Like, community groups, or a mailing list? Do you have -

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It was like, yes, a mailing list, a spreadsheet of constituents that lived in that area.

Ms BADGER - Yes. One other clarifying question there, sorry: that was - you're saying, just to confirm, that Ms Howlett asked you to use your Government email address to send that to members of the public?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr WINTER - Thank you for being with us. As the Chair said, I'm sorry that some of the things you said are horrible, and I'm really sorry it's happened to you. Unfortunately, given our Terms of Reference - I'd love to inquire more - they're very serious - we've just got to stick to Terms of Reference. I apologise for that.

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The thing that strikes me about your evidence on the email is that on the 22nd of March [2024], when the email was sent out, Jane Howlett wasn't even a Member of Parliament; she wasn't a Member for Prosser; she was a candidate for Lyons. Can you explain to the Committee why someone who wasn't even a Member of Parliament was directing parliamentary staff to do things?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It was part of who Jane - how I know her in the workplace, it was -I was directed to send different emails to certain members of the public. I mean there were times when it was even for signage as well, where I didn't think that it would be approved and I would question her on that – 'I can't do that.' Like I said again, that there was -

Mr WINTER - So at this point you were working for Leonie Hiscutt, formally.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr WINTER - What percentage of your work at that time was for Leonie Hiscutt and what percentage of your work was for Jane Howlett at that time?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - A hundred per cent for Jane Howlett.

Mr WINTER - Over what period of time do you think you're doing 100 per cent of work for Jane Howlett?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Two weeks after I'd been employed.

Mr WINTER - So, that's from November [2023]?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Mm.

Mr VERMEY - Chair -

Mr WINTER - Just if I can continue on this one: so just in terms of - I'm just trying to get this straight. So, when you're employed by Parliamentary Services, did you have an interview with Leonie Hiscutt to work for her?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I did. It was quite informal for a Government position, but I did have a meeting with her, yes.

Mr WINTER - Did you have - sort of what was your - what was explained to you about what the role would be at that stage?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It was explained that I'd be working in her Office, in the Legislative Council, and I would be helping with the bills that were on notice and not on notice. I was getting trained in that for two weeks. I was trained and I was told that when Parliament was sitting for the next year [2024], that that's what my role was. That didn't happen because of the election, but still, when - over the summer break, Leonie said that it's not that busy and that her phone would be directed to me to answer phone calls from the constituents of up North.

CHAIR - I just want to go back to the really crux of this that is relevant to what the Committee could consider, and that is the details of the email that you were requested to send

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out. So, when you say political material, what was enclosed within that? What were the details that you recall of that email?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - From memory, it was grants that the Liberals were offering, like, if they were to, you know, get in Government again. So, yes -

Mr VERMEY - Chair, just point of reference there: this is the 2024, not 2025, we're talking about. But also, the email, was that on a Liberal Party email that you had as a Liberal Party member, and was that in your private time, or in the work time?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - No, it was in the work time and it was sent through from the media office to send out. Jane had been asking them for it, and then, yes, she asked me to send it out. Well, she instructed me to send it out.

Mr VERMEY - And again, this is in the 2024, not the 2025 time.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

CHAIR - Yes, and as you did already confirm to the hearing that it was from a Government email account. So, I assume that Parliament - yes. Thank you.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, that's correct. I believe there was - the GBEs [scrutiny hearings], it was raised by Meg Webb, and apparently, the Premier had apologised, well I heard it, and I received a phone call about the email and I - well, actually I will go back. After sending the email I was concerned and I contacted the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I spoke to the Manager, and I said that 'this is what I've been instructed to do by Jane and I'm not comfortable with it because I know it's not okay.' She just said 'don't worry about it, nothing will happen about it. Then when I got the phone call from her to say, 'can you please' - that was when the GBE meeting was on. I said, 'well, I explained to you what had happened when it happened' and then, like I said, it was said that a staffer had made an honest mistake. It wasn't a staffer.

Mr VERMEY - So, this email was, again -

CHAIR - Do we have a date for the email?

Mr VERMEY - Yes, a date for it and sort of rough time?

Mr WINTER - 22nd of March.

CHAIR - 22nd of March 2024, thank you.

Mr VERMEY - And the time that the email was sent, roughly?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I haven't got that time, but I'm sure -

CHAIR - We could take it on notice.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

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Mr VERMEY - And you had access to Jane's emails? Access to be able to send through hers as well?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, but I was instructed, like I said, to send it from mine, by Jane.

Mr VERMEY - But you can't remember what time of day that potentially was?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Do you reckon you could, back in 2024?

CHAIR - In regards to being instructed to send this out or carry out any other duties, how is that communication happening? Is that something that was done via email, call, text?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - What's that, sorry, again? Can you please explain?

CHAIR - How were you being requested to do this work that you felt was outside of the scope or in breach of caretaker?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It would be by text or by phone call or if Jane was there next to me.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr WINTER - Where were you physically working from at that stage?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I was working in my car, at home.

Mr WINTER - So, were you doorknocking and things like that as well?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr WINTER - So, at that stage, I'm just going to take this back to - this is the bit that I'm sort of struggling with, is: you're working formally, being paid under your appointment, your boss at that stage is actually Leonie Hiscutt, but you've said you were doing 100 per cent of your work for Jane Howlett, who wasn't a Member of Parliament at that time. For how long did that go for when you were - was it months? Are we talking weeks, months?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, months. Months.

Mr WINTER - In the year 2024, just to estimate, did you do any work for Leonie Hiscutt during 2024?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - No.

Mr WINTER - So, it was exclusively for Jane Howlett -

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

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Mr WINTER - From the 1st of January [2024] until the election date, even though for some of that time she wasn't a Member of Parliament and she was never actually your boss; you were just campaigning for Jane Howlett?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr WINTER - Right. I mean, there's problems around that. I guess part of the reason you're here is because you're concerned about it as well. In terms of the *State Service Act 2000*, the *Criminal Code Act 1924*, by having directed you to do that work, potentially, there's some criminal problems for those who've done that. What points did you raise concern with anyone about these roles? Was it just with Jane or did you raise the concerns with others?

CHAIR - And just to bring it back to relevance to the Committee as well, if you could just outline, when you're raising those concerns, are you doing it under your concerns about being directed under your appointment and it being outside of the scope of your work, or because it is explicitly caretaker; you, presumably, as a part of the State Service still would have -

Mr VERMEY - Chair.

CHAIR - received a copy of the caretaker conventions during that time?

Mr VERMEY - Chair, point of relevance: again, this is 2024 and we're doing 2025.

Mr WINTER - Mr Vermey, you agreed to this witness.

CHAIR - Sorry, order. The Committee has approved hearing from Ms Minnikin-Smith, who quite clearly provided us evidence from the 2024 election campaign. So, on that premise, there was an agreement to hear that because it's relevant.

Mr VERMEY - And as I did say to Mr Winter, when we were discussing that: I am happy as long as it's relevant to the 2025 election.

CHAIR - Absolutely. This discussion, sorry, Members, was something that should have occurred at the last meeting. We've got the witness here before us who's provided an outline of her evidence in advance to the Committee. Committee Members have voted on that, so we will proceed hearing what is relevant to the 2024 caretaker conventions as Members agreed to. We will just go back to that original question. I might just rephrase it and start again to refresh your memory: had you, irrespective of your employment conditions at that time, received a copy of the caretaker conventions, as someone applicable to that?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Mm.

CHAIR - You did?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

CHAIR - Yes, absolutely. So, you were aware of what that was; when you were raising these concerns about what you were being directed - the task that you were being directed to undertake and -

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Mr VERMEY - Chair, I'm still a bit confused of the - I understand things happened in 2024. We had an election in 2025, and that things happened in 2025, and we need to focus on that. What happened in the past, I wasn't privy to that, I wasn't part of that; I acknowledge what you're coming up with, but the 2025 election is what we're discussing; that's what the whole caretaker convention is about. I feel that we're -

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Vermey. We are, and that's what was -

Mr VERMEY - We are truly out of the scope -

CHAIR - That's what was agreed to, Mr Vermey. So, in the interest of time, I'll take your comment, but that's already a decision that's been made, so I apologise, but that's a point that you should have made at the last meeting.

Mr VERMEY - Yep.

CHAIR - So, we'll just go back to that again. When you're raising these concerns about your appointment, there's obviously two different issues that the Committee needs to consider here. One is the use of public resources, such as staffing, appropriately or inappropriately, under caretaker. Then there's a separate issue, which is, of course, a general stepping outside of the boundary of someone's appointment. I guess for the Committee's considerations, we're trying to establish where this evidence might fall within that.

So, you raised concerns. Was that about it being outside of the scope of your role? Did you at any point raise that it might be in breach of the caretaker conventions as well?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I had phone calls that I'd made to the Manager, where I was questioning both what you've just raised, and I literally was told not to worry about it. At times, you know, I sent emails about different incidents that had happened, as well, and I never received an email back. I was, yeah, pretty much shut down all the time.

CHAIR - And this is your personal experience? Is this something that you understand was commonplace, where people were being directed to do campaigning work, or things that were possibly in breach of caretaker conventions? Or is this an isolated incident?

Mr VERMEY - Chair is that caretaking conventions for 2025? Again, I just want to seek that -

CHAIR - Again, Mr Vermey, I'm not going to reiterate that again. The decision was made from the Committee. You were a party to that vote, Mr Vermey. We're not going to reflect on it again.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I believe there were others. I can't speak for other members and staffers, but I do know there have been other staffers for Jane Howlett, who she - they would campaign for her.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'm just going to double-check there are no questions from online and then I'm going to go to you, Mr Winter. I'll take that as a no from online.

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Mr WINTER - Chair, just again onto the caretaker provisions and those sort of things, so during that period of time where caretaker applies, but also there's a State Service Code of Conduct, can you just run through - you've said that you worked 100 per cent of the time for Jane Howlett, even though you were employed to support the Leader. At that stage, Jane Howlett was the Member for Prosser for some of it, but she wasn't a Minister, and normally Ministers would have advisers. Yet, that was sort of the role you were playing, despite not being paid for that role. What sort of activities were you doing? Was it campaign activities like doorknocking or letterboxing? Can you describe what a day was like?

Mr VERMEY - Chair, point of relevance, is this more a workplace matter?

CHAIR - I think we've covered that already, Mr Vermeij. I did outline that that's exactly the delineation that it's over to the Committee to hear. Mr Winter's question is in order, because it was about caretaker.

Mr VERMEY - Were you a state public servant?

CHAIR - Mr Vermeij, Mr Winter's asked a question; it's in order; we will hear an answer.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Sorry, can you please repeat that?

Mr WINTER - Yeah, apologies. I'll try, if we can, I know it's difficult when you're being interrupted all the time. You don't deserve that. So just, you've explained that you were working for Jane Howlett at that time even though you were employed for someone else. What sort of activities were you undertaking during that caretaker period? Were you doorknocking, letterboxing, campaigning - or was there other work you were doing?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - All campaigning.

Mr WINTER - Can you describe some of that campaigning?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yeah. Doorknocking, letterbox dropping. Also, putting together a list of members of the public, certain community groups; also, there was her campaigning events. Yeah, pretty much it was all campaigning.

Mr VERMEY - Chair.

Mr WINTER - That email that we've got the example of, and it was - you're right, it was asked about during a Legislative Council - I've just brought up the Question on Notice that was provided by - or the answer on notice that was provided by the Premier at the time. He said - the question was, 'Would this be a breach of the Ministerial Code of Conduct were the candidate in question a Minister contesting re-election,' - so, this is about - actually, I'll start again, just so we're really clear.

CHAIR - Clearly outline that, yeah.

Mr WINTER - The question is,

In regards to the example of an election candidate campaign email sent, unsolicited, from a public service government email address, to a recipient at

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another public service government agency email address, would this be a breach of the current Ministerial Code of Conduct were the candidate in question a minister recontesting an election, noting they remain a minister during caretaker periods?

Mr VERMEY - Chair, time's up. I believe it's 11 o'clock.

Mr WINTER - And the answer provided by the Premier -

Mr Vermeij, you wasted so much time, we might need to take a bit longer. The answer provided by -

Mr VERMEY - Well, I didn't actually get to ask a question, but anyway.

Mr WINTER - Well, we can take extra time if you like, Mr Vermeij. And the answer provided by the Premier was:

As advised -

CHAIR - Mr Winter, are you just going to read this out and ask a question immediately afterwards?

Mr WINTER - Well, I was just going to ask a question about the answer.

Mr VERMEY - It is 11 o'clock.

Mr WINTER -

As advised to the Committee, there was an email sent out on 22 March this year -

That being 2024 -

at 9.03 p.m., which was inadvertently sent from a staffer's email using a parliamentary address instead of a campaign email. The error was realised at the time and I'm advised an apology was made by the staffer once that was realised.

Mr VERMEY - One minute past.

Mr WINTER - Is that a correct summation of what happened? Was it inadvertent - was it inadvertently sent from your staffer's email? From your email?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes, it was sent from my - but I did not -

Mr WINTER - It was in your evidence earlier -

Mr VERMEY - Time. Chair.

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Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - apologise for a mistake I'd made because it wasn't my mistake.

Mr WINTER - Yes. But you actually pointed out before you sent the email -

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes. Correct.

Mr WINTER - that you shouldn't be doing it and you were told to do it anyway.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr VERMEY - Time.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr WINTER - Chair, given the amount of time that's been wasted by Mr Vermeij, I wouldn't mind being able to ask a few more questions.

Mr VERMEY - I'd like to seek a point relevance on that.

CHAIR - We have got the hearing scheduled -

Mr WINTER - It's quite extraordinary, I've never seen a Government Member do this before.

CHAIR - No, I agree, it is very extreme. However, even the question that you've just read out, Mr Winter, is about the appointment and didn't mention caretaker. We have concluded the hearing schedule. The Committee can determine whether they feel that there are unanswered questions and follow up with the witness, either in writing or hold another hearing if the Committee deems that applicable - just for your reference, for a reminder for the Members here and for anyone that might be listening online as well.

I do need to read you an important statement after the evidence that you've provided. What you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to the comments that you make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said to us today. Do you understand that?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I do.

CHAIR - Excellent. Thank you very much for appearing before us today.

The witness withdrew

The Committee adjourned at 11.03 a.m.