

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 30 November 2018 11:35 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: Letter [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Attachments: Merit Protection Commissioner.pdf

For Official Use Only

From: Abetz, Eric (Senator) <Senator.Abetz@aph.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 7 August 2018 1:13 PM
To: LLOYD, John <John.Lloyd@apsc.gov.au>
Cc: Josh Manuatu <Josh.manuatu@aph.gov.au>
Subject: Letter

Dear Commissioner

Please see attached a letter I have sent to the Merit Protection Commissioner today in relation to the inquiry that is presently underway.

I have written to the Commissioner following responses to Questions on Notice that were drawn to my attention.

I provide it purely for your information.

Yours sincerely

SENATOR THE HON. ERIC ABETZ
Liberal Senator for Tasmania





PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA - THE SENATE

6 August 2018

Senator the Hon
Eric Abetz
Liberal Senator for Tasmania

Ms Linda Waugh
Merit Protection Commissioner
GPO Box 3176
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Commissioner

This correspondence relates to the current inquiry being undertaken by you in relation to the Australian Public Service Commissioner. I write noting that I was the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service from 2013 to 2015, the period in which Mr Lloyd was both appointed and during the time which the allegations relate.

While I was broadly aware of your inquiry, the full release of correspondence to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, of which I am a Participating Senator, gave a greater insight into the issues raised.

The decision of 14 June 2018 made by the Acting Commissioner specifically states that the inquiry will be into:

Whether the Commissioner used the resources of the Australian Public Service Commission to create a document which set out contents of various public service enterprise agreements and an analysis of that content for the sole purpose of providing it to the Institute of Public Affairs (of which he was a member)...

Given the confined nature of this inquiry, I am disappointed that neither you nor your office has made contact with me as these matters could have been cleared up much earlier.

On numerous occasions, my then Ministerial office sought from the Australian Public Service Commission examples of workplace entitlements that taxpayers were funding that were out of step with community standards. It was important that such material was at hand to ensure that the Government was best placed to respond to criticisms of the Government's Workplace Bargaining Policy.

Shortly after his appointment, my then Ministerial office and I discussed with Commissioner Lloyd the importance of compiling such information and he indicated that the Commission would be preparing information on soft employment arrangements in the Commonwealth public sector.

While I cannot specifically ascertain whether the specific document was shared with my office, my office was provided with similar documents and material, some of which was shared by me with Cabinet colleagues and with the Government more broadly. I note that I also utilised this and similar information in public advocacy for the Government's position, including in multiple media interviews and in response to Questions both in the Senate and at Senate Estimates.

For example, I note that on page 18 of SQ18-0000048 it specifically indicates, in relation to the document:

...advancing Tasmania's interests.

HOBART: 136 Davey Street GPO BOX 1675 HOBART TAS 7001 Ph 03 6224 3707 Fax 03 6224 3709 Toll free 1300 132 493
CANBERRA: Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600 Ph 02 6277 3019 Email: senator.abetz@aph.gov.au Web: <http://abetz.com.au>

The APS Commission prepared a paper headed Examples of 'Soft' arrangements in Commonwealth Enterprise Agreements. The paper argued that APS employees had enjoyed wage increases substantially above CPI over the past decade and significantly more than remuneration increases in most other industries. The paper asserted that Commonwealth public sector agreements had accumulated generous terms and conditions beyond those provided by minimum safety nets and often well above community standards.

This analysis was provided by the APSC to me in early 2015 which was then used in the public domain by me, specifically in a Letter to the Editor published in the Canberra Times on 11 January 2015:

It is a fact that APS median wage rises have totalled 42 per cent over the last decade, compared to CPI increases of 28 per cent. This comparison was made in the context of Community and Public Sector Union assertions about real wage cuts.

It is also incorrect to assert that "42 per cent is about the same as everyone else has had over the last decade". Increases in the private sector wage price index over the same period totalled 35.7 per cent.

In this context, the CPSU's claim for a further wage increase of 12 per cent is utterly irresponsible and completely unrealistic in the current budget context. Most private sector employees could only dream of such largesse at the present time.

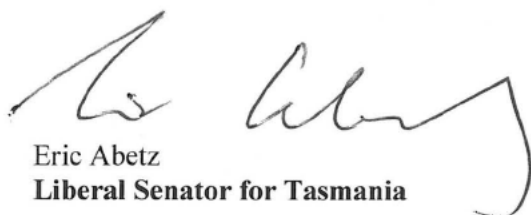
A similar analysis was also used by me in response to a question in Question Time on 4 March 2015 and at multiple Senate Estimates hearings.

But coming to the terms of reference of your inquiry which focuses on whether the research undertaken was for the sole purpose of providing information to an external body, I contend that this was not the case. The information, material and analysis was clearly prepared with the principal purpose of supporting me and my successors as Ministers and more broadly the Government.

I find it completely unremarkable that the Australian Public Service Commission would prepare information that supports the implementation of Government policy that it is charged with implementing and to share that information with third parties.

I trust this correspondence assists you with your inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Eric Abetz
Liberal Senator for Tasmania