



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Turnbull Government
SPEECH

Wednesday, 25 November 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date	Wednesday, 25 November 2015	Source	House
Page	13734	Proof	No
Questioner		Responder	
Speaker	Perrett, Graham, MP	Question No.	

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (15:42): I rise to speak about this MPI on the importance of integrity in government, following the member for Parkes. I have been in this parliament for the same time as him—eight years and one day. I know a little bit about the people I have met over those eight years. I know most people are here for good reasons. Irrespective of what side of the chamber they sit on—in government or in opposition—most people are here to do good things.

But what I noted in the speeches put forward by the member for Aston and the member for Parkes was a gaping and incredible silence when it came to defending their colleague. We are here today talking about the importance of integrity in government. I do so through the prism of having a great respect for this democratic institution. I know how tough it is for the member for Parkes to be an MP a long way, like many of us, away from his family and partner. This is a job that is incredibly tough when it comes to our families and our partners and our lifestyles because of the hours and the travel. So you need to have that unwavering belief in democracy to do this job. That belief in democracy is more important than any one person here of the 150 elected members of the House of Representatives. It is more important than any political party that we represent. It is more important than power. That is why this MPI is so important. If we are going to have faith in this democratic institution—this building; this wonderful piece of history in which it is such an honour for me to represent the people of Moreton—we must have faith in all of the people in this parliament.

Due to my concerns with the actions of three people opposite, particularly the member for Fisher, and following Judge Rares's judgement in the Federal Court, I wrote to the Australian Federal Police in December 2012. Judge Rares had said that he had reached a 'firm conclusion' that the 'predominant purpose' of Mr Ashby's claim was to 'pursue a political attack against Mr Slipper' designed to 'tip the government to Mal Brough and the LNP's advantage'. That is the history. The matter concerning Mr Brough is not before the courts at the moment; it is only being investigated by the police. The quotes I gave relate to the Federal Court case that threw out Mr Ashby's claim against Mr Slipper.

My first letter to the AFP, on 21 December 2012, directed them to the findings by Judge Rares, which said:

The material also indicates that Mr Brough procured Mr Ashby and Ms Doane to provide unauthorised access to restricted data contrary to s478.1 of the Criminal Code, and unauthorised disclosure of information by Commonwealth officers contrary to s70 of the Crimes Act 1914.

This communication with the AFP was in December 2012. The judgement of Judge Rares was subsequently overturned by the full court of the Federal Court. However, I note that Mr Ashby has not pursued his claim against Mr Slipper since it was overturned.

We then had that incredible admission on *60 Minutes* on 7 September 2014. In the interview, when Liz Hayes asked the current member for Fisher, 'Did you ask James Ashby to procure copies of Peter Slipper's diary for you?' Mr Brough replied, 'Yes, I did.' That is why it is quite telling that the two previous speakers to this MPI debate made no mention of their party colleague at all. After that public admission by Mr Brough, I wrote to the AFP again, for the third time, on 8 September 2014, pointing out his admission.

We then had that incredible set of circumstances where, after the democratically elected Prime Minister was cut down by the plotters opposite, the new Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull, appointed the current member for Fisher to the office that requires the highest standard of integrity. This is not a normal portfolio; this is a portfolio with responsibility for key integrity agencies such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Australian National Audit Office and the Australian Electoral Commission and for the administration of the parliamentary entitlements framework, including Cabcharges and the like. This is not an ordinary portfolio. It is extraordinary that he could still be in that job after the Australian Federal Police raided—not visited—his home. He was raided by the

Australian Federal Police. Arthur Sinodinos stood down for less. I cannot believe this man is still sitting in that role.