



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**  
**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:**  
**TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS**

**Special Minister of State**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 2 December 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Wednesday, 2 December 2015	<b>Source</b> Senate
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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Brandis, Sen George	<b>Question No.</b>

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:08): The Labor Party is plainly embarrassed by Senator Wong's performance yesterday. I want to begin this contribution by saying—

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** You should have told her you're doing this.

**Senator Conroy:** You are a coward.

**Senator BRANDIS:** May I predict that throughout this contribution there will be attempts—

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** Did you tell Senator Wong you were doing this or are you being a coward?

**Senator Conroy:** You didn't even have the guts to tell her.

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** You didn't tell Senator Wong you were doing this. You're a coward.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The Senate needs to come to order.

**Senator BRANDIS:** I do predict that I will be shouted down throughout this contribution by Senator Collins and Senator Conroy. However, I do want to address the matters raised by Senator Collins. Senator Wong asked me a question today in which she referred to an interview that Mr Brough gave during a *60 Minutes* program some time ago. There is no dispute that Mr Brough did give that interview. The subject of that interview was what has come to be called 'the James Ashby affair'. Senator Wong attributed some words to Mr Brough in her question and it was not a quote from anything Mr Brough said in that interview. It was not a quote from anything Mr Brough said in that interview, and yet Senator Wong attributed those words to him and stated a conclusion on the basis of the attribution to Mr Brough of words that he did not use. Let me say that again: she announced a conclusion about Mr Brough on the basis of attributing to him words that he did not use. The reason I approached the answer to that question in the way that I did is that Senator Wong did the same thing to me yesterday when she attributed to me words that I did not use and she attributed to Mr Michael Keenan, the Minister for Justice, words that he did not use.

**Senator O'Neill:** The President called it a confession. She told the truth and you are trying to cover up. The Attorney-General is hiding from the truth.

**Senator Conroy interjecting—**

**Senator Jacinta Collins interjecting—**

**Senator Ian Macdonald interjecting—**

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The Senate needs to come to order. There is far too much interjecting.

**Senator BRANDIS:** What is being suggested against Mr Brough by the Australian Labor Party is serious, and we know that there is a police investigation, which means that it is even more important than it ordinarily would be that senators who wish to make allegations against him and wish to make those allegations on the basis of his words should quote those words accurately. That is what was not done on this occasion. That was not done.

**Senator Fawcett:** Mr Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. Standing order 203 goes to persistently and wilfully continuing to refuse to conform to standing order 197, which you have requested the senators to observe.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I accept that point of order, Senator Fawcett. Again, I ask senators to cease interjecting and come to order.

**Senator BRANDIS:** What Senator Wong put to me yesterday in the second of two questions she asked me is this, and I read from the *Hansard*:

I refer to the Attorney-General's previous answer to my question in which he claimed not to recall any conversation with the Minister for Justice in relation to the execution of a search warrant on Mr Brough, the Special Minister of State. Is the minister aware that, a short while ago, the Justice Minister informed the other place that he told the Attorney-General the warrant would be executed?

Both of the propositions, both of the words attributed in that question by Senator Wong to me and to Mr Michael Keenan, were wrong. The question that Senator Wong asked me in the first of her two questions was this:

Did the Minister for Justice inform his senior minister, the Attorney-General, of the AFP's intention to execute a search warrant to the home of Mr Brough?

The question was not whether I was informed in relation to the execution of a search warrant but whether or not I had been informed of the AFP's intention to execute a search warrant. Equally, Mr Keenan, when he was asked a question, replied:

After the warrants were executed, as I would normally do in a matter like this, I informed the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Attorney-General ...

'After the warrants were executed'. The difference between the past tense and the present tense may not be apparent to Senator Stephen Conroy. The difference between the present tense and the future tense and the past tense may not be apparent to Senator Stephen Conroy. The fundamental difference in meaning between the statements that were made and what Senator Wong attributed to the statements that were made is very clear to us. (*Time expired*)