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Monday, 26 May 2014

Mr David Morris MP
Chair
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE



Dear Mr Morris,

I refer to the PAEC hearing attended by the Presiding officers of the Victorian Parliament on May 12th and seek to clarify one of my answers to a question posed by the Deputy Chair, Mr Martin Pakula.

I will not seek to change the Hansard record as it fairly records what I said at the hearing, however, I wish to clarify that one of my answers was provided on a misunderstanding of the actual question.

In an answer to Mr Pakula, I responded to the effect that former Speaker, Ken Smith, had released "both" security tapes to media representatives in respect of an incident involving the Member for Frankston on the front steps of Parliament.

In my response, I was referring to the initial video coverage of the event and to the video footage subsequently released to the Police and at a press conference by the former Speaker. It did not occur to me that Mr Pakula's question sought a response on the release of additional video footage in February of this year by an unknown person.

I was made aware of the February release of security footage held by the Parliament after it was reported in the media and I ordered an internal investigation into the unauthorised release of that footage because of the implications for the integrity of our security processes and potential evidence in any legal proceedings.

Officers of the Parliament were unable to establish who released the video footage in February and was the source of media reports at that time and I personally have no knowledge of who might have been responsible. The former Speaker advised both the current Speaker and myself that he did not release the additional footage in February.

My response to Mr Pakula's question was not intended to convey that the Speaker was responsible for the unauthorised release of the security footage in February but instead was in reference to the footage used by the Police and the media last year albeit the initial public coverage in the first instance was obtained from a source other than the Parliament and in the second instance from a media briefing by the former Speaker.

I apologise to the committee for misinterpreting Mr Pakula's question and for therefore providing an answer that did not accord with my knowledge of the circumstances surrounding media coverage and the source of footage use in reports.

I assure the committee that I am keenly aware of the importance of the integrity of our security systems and have, in fact, refused to release security footage related to another incident at the Parliament.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Bruce Atkinson MLC
President of the Legislative Council
Parliament of Victoria

cc Mr Martin Pakula, Deputy Chair PAEC
Mr Ken Smith MP, Member for Bass
Mr Peter Lochert, Secretary DPS