



Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Parliament of Queensland

Media Statement

Wednesday, 24 October 2012

PEEPING CAMERAS ISSUED WITH SHOW CAUSE

Network cameras have been asked to show cause as to why they should be readmitted to the Queensland Parliament's chamber after being discovered to have filmed documents on the desks of Members in direct breach of the rules. With the role of network cameras under a cloud, the recent upgrades to the Parliament's broadcast system will allow the public to continue to access the proceedings.

Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, Hon Fiona Simpson MP, said that a serious breach of trust and of the Media Access Conditions occurred recently when network cameras captured close up footage of papers on Members' desks and later broadcast them.

Speaker Simpson said, "The Chamber is a workplace, and MPs are entitled to have working documents in their place of work. They should not have to be concerned with whether sensitive or private documents, including constituent documents with personal details, might be filmed by network cameras."

"Not only is the behaviour of network cameras a direct breach of the long-standing Media Access Conditions, but legal advice I have recently received is that this incident also risks placing the network cameras in breach of parliamentary privilege and possibly in contempt of Parliament," said Ms Simpson.

Speaker Simpson expressed her disappointment that another breach had occurred only two days after the network cameras were readmitted from serving a penalty for a previous breach of the rules.

"I think the people of Queensland want to know what their Parliament is doing. Parliament has recently increased accessibility for a diversity of media outlets to the broadcast produced by the independent and non-political staff of the Parliamentary Services. The Parliament has six, high-definition broadcast cameras installed in the chamber and they have produced a live broadcast for Sky News and A-PAC during several sittings now," said Ms Simpson.

Speaker Simpson said that as a former journalist herself she considers that the media play an important role in a democratic society, informing the public and ensuring coverage that is factual, free of bias and in the public interest.

"The majority of journalists conduct themselves well, abiding by these rules. However, it's disappointing that this breach has occurred with the filming of Members' documents with the risk to their confidentiality. As Speaker, I have a responsibility to act as guardian of the rights, powers and immunities of the House. This breach has revealed the Parliament cannot guarantee confidentiality of Members' papers while network cameras are in the Chamber," said Ms Simpson.

In order to allow the television journalists the opportunity to respond, the network cameras have been suspended from the chamber, leaving the six parliamentary cameras in place, and the journalists have been asked to show cause as to why network cameras should be readmitted. On this occasion, the Speaker has decided not to refer them to the Ethics Committee.

Speaker Simpson said the television stations are welcome to use the uncensored, broadcast quality vision produced by the Parliamentary Services staff. Recently upgraded technology by the Parliament has improved access to the feed for television networks not based on site. Whether the network channels use the feed rests with them.

A comprehensive report to Members with information relating to this has been tabled and is available online here:

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/tableOffice/TabledPapers/2012/5412T1242.pdf>

Media Contact: Ruth Limkin, Protocol and Communications Officer
Office of the Speaker
Phone 07 3406 7055 Email: ruth.limkin@parliament.qld.gov.au