



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND
ADMINISTRATION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into the CIT CEO recruitment process](#))

Members:

**MR J MILLIGAN (Chair)
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)
MS C TOUGH
MS J CLAY**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 30 MARCH 2026

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms S Milne (Ph: 6205 0435)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

WITNESSES

LUNDY, MS KATE, Board Chair, Canberra Institute of Technology **1**

PETTERSSON, MR MICHAEL, Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations **15**

Privilege statement

The Assembly has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

Witnesses must tell the truth: giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter, and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly.

While the Committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 2.00 pm

LUNDY, MS KATE, Board Chair, Canberra Institute of Technology

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration for its inquiry into the CIT CEO recruitment process. The committee today will hear from Ms Lundy, the Board Chair of the Canberra Institute of Technology, and the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or who may be watching online.

This hearing is a legal proceeding of the Assembly, and it has the same standing as the proceedings of the Assembly itself. Therefore, today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly.

The hearings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if you could say, "I will take that question on notice." That will certainly help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions that have been taken on notice from the transcript.

We will be hearing first from Ms Lundy, Chair of the CIT Board. Please note that, as a witness, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence, as I have already indicated, will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

We will go straight to questions. I would like to give my first lot of questions to Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Thank you, Chair. Ms Lundy, can I ask: did Dr McNeill disclose, at any time during the recruitment process, including in her application documentation, that she was the subject of a misconduct investigation or an investigation by TAFE New South Wales?

Ms Lundy: No. I think it is already a matter of public record that she did not.

MR PARTON: At what point did you become aware that Dr McNeill was the subject of an investigation by TAFE New South Wales?

Ms Lundy: We received correspondence from the Integrity Commission that they had received an anonymous complaint and, because it was not in their jurisdiction, that was forwarded to us. I believe you have been provided with that correspondence. It was only at that point that we became aware of the allegations and then sought to ask TAFE New South Wales. We advised the minister of these allegations and sought information from

TAFE New South Wales at that point.

MR PARTON: How many anonymous or otherwise complaints has the board received about Dr McNeill, and on what dates were they received?

Ms Lundy: I think the first complaint we received was in relation to the correspondence from the Integrity Commission. There may have been others, so I will take any additional complaints we received on notice. In fact, the substantive issue was this anonymous complaint, which raised the allegations about an inquiry taking place.

MR PARTON: In your media appearance on the ABC on 19 March, you said, and I will quote you directly: “I don’t know, Ross, what the allegations were, and I don’t know the motivation for them doing what they’re doing.” Can I ask: what action have you taken to find out what these allegations were?

Ms Lundy: Following the receipt of that letter, we did write to TAFE New South Wales, to ask for details about that. We certainly advised the minister, and we also wrote to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner, to make them aware of the allegations and whether they had also received anything like that. Essentially, we set about doing our level best to find out what, if anything, was going on, whether there was any truth to the anonymous allegations, and whether there was any action we could or needed to take as a result of receiving that information.

MR PARTON: Am I to understand that between 19 March—which was when you appeared on the ABC—and now, you are clearer on what the allegations were?

Ms Lundy: We have received additional confidential information.

MR PARTON: Since 19 March?

Ms Lundy: Since 19 March. It is confidential and it does relate to matters that are currently subject to sub judice, given the ongoing legal action with Dr McNeill and New South Wales TAFE. I am not in a position to disclose more about that. Essentially, the time period that you are referring to in the recruitment phase was very much dealing with an anonymous allegation, but we did not have any specific information at that time, until it was provided, in fact, by Dr McNeill herself.

MR PARTON: Why is it confidential? Additionally, when you made the statement on 19 March, you basically said that what occurred at TAFE New South Wales or any allegations did not actually impact on Dr McNeill’s work here in the ACT. Has that position changed since you have become fully furnished with more information?

Ms Lundy: Broadly, no, based on what we understand our role to be, as the Board of CIT. We have every confidence in our recruitment process, and we acted on the information we received—

MR PARTON: Do you still today have every confidence in the recruitment process?

Ms Lundy: Let me finish.

MR PARTON: Sorry.

Ms Lundy: We recognise—I think it is a really important distinction—that we have a role to play as a board in managing that employment process and overseeing that contract of employment with Dr McNeill. We also have information that legal proceedings are underway in relation to that New South Wales investigation. We are in a really challenging position of not being able to reflect on an ongoing legal matter, but we are aware of more information, which I suppose you could describe as giving us a bit more flavour as to the matters that are subject to that investigation.

MR PARTON: Ms Lundy, in that ABC Radio interview, you continued to suggest that because Dr McNeill had legal advice that she was not supposed to allude to the allegations from TAFE New South Wales—

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MR PARTON: that is why she did not do it. Does that stack up? Do you accept that? I am not sure that it does stack up. Does it stack up for you?

Ms Lundy: Well, we are not the pub, with all due respect. We have a process that we are bound to follow. I can assure you and all of the committee that when we became aware of the ongoing investigation—which, I might add, Dr McNeill believed had concluded following her resignation—we took every opportunity to find out what our obligations were in addressing this information. Most of it was limited by the fact that there was legal action underway, with Dr McNeill’s position that she was challenging not just the findings but the process as well.

MR PARTON: Have you seen this legal advice which, in theory, precluded Dr McNeill from making any mention whatsoever in this process?

Ms Lundy: It was advice from New South Wales TAFE, who were conducting the investigation. Yes, we are satisfied, and have been satisfied, that she received that advice. In the end, it is Dr McNeill’s purview, under legal advice and the direction she gets from that jurisdiction, as to what she says and does, and we need to work with that.

MR PARTON: You mentioned in earlier evidence the Public Sector Standards Commission, but I am not fully au fait on the timeline. We know that, in an email dated 19 June 2025 to the CIT Board, Mr Pettersson’s Chief of Staff said that he had discussed with the minister, who agreed that the Public Sector Standards Commissioner or commission was the appropriate entity to consider these matters, and that while it may already have been included, “we ask the commissioner to consider Dr McNeill’s conduct during the recruitment process”. Did you refer this matter to the Public Sector Standards Commission and, if so, when?

Ms Lundy: We certainly wrote to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. I will take on notice the exact request, but we certainly made them aware of the situation.

MR PARTON: And what is the status of that? Do you know if there is an investigation? Did you hear back?

Ms Lundy: We were advised that they had not received any information and that it was for the board to deal with.

MR PARTON: I am sorry; the Public Sector Standards Commission indicated that they were not investigating?

Ms Lundy: I will take on notice that piece of correspondence, but my recollection is that we advised the Public Sector Standards Commissioner of the correspondence and our concerns. Their response was that the matter related to a different jurisdiction. I will take that on notice because I think we were asking the question in relation to what was happening in New South Wales.

MR PARTON: All right. I think—

Ms Lundy: I do want to take that on notice so that I can clarify that.

MR PARTON: It was suggested that you table, if possible, Dr McNeill's contract and application forms, including the TAFE references, at this hearing.

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MR PARTON: Is that possible, Ms Lundy?

Ms Lundy: I believe you have received those documents.

MR PARTON: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Yes, the committee has received those documents. The committee will decide what to do with those documents in due course.

MR PARTON: All right; thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Carrick?

MS CARRICK: My questions are around the recruitment process. Ms Lundy, can you confirm that this was a nationwide search for a CEO rather than just within the ACT, the public service, or the Australian Public Service?

Ms Lundy: I certainly can. In fact, CIT went to market for recruitment services for the role of recruiting the CEO. That was on 31 October 2024. Executive Intelligence Group were advised on 22 November that they had been successful, and national advertising was undertaken by that recruitment firm.

MS CARRICK: On Dr McNeill's application form, there is a question that says, "Are you currently under investigation for breaching the APS code of conduct?" Why did it refer to the APS code of conduct when it was a much broader search?

Ms Lundy: I believe that was the standard form that the recruitment company used. They do a lot of commonwealth recruiting, so it referenced the APS. That is my understanding.

MS CARRICK: Did it not raise concerns that the question about being under investigation was so narrow?

Ms Lundy: We asked a lot of questions through the recruitment process around any issues relating to causes for concern or any activity, and we did not receive any information that gave us any cause for concern.

MS CARRICK: Did you see the application itself—Dr McNeill’s application?

Ms Lundy: Yes, the panel, of which I was a member, would have seen that application.

MS CARRICK: It did not raise concerns that it had the narrow focus, “under investigation”, when actually looking at the application?

Ms Lundy: No, it did not stand out at the time.

MS CARRICK: You have said who undertook the recruitment process. Did they undertake the referee reports as well?

Ms Lundy: Yes, they did.

MS CARRICK: Did you undertake any referee reports?

Ms Lundy: Yes, we did. I was certainly on a call to one of the TAFE New South Wales referees and also to another very experienced TAFE expert through that process.

MS CARRICK: Did you contact your peers in TAFE New South Wales—the chair of the board or the CEO of TAFE New South Wales—to get a comfort level, to check with them?

Ms Lundy: The CEO of TAFE New South Wales was certainly in conversation with us and gave a reference.

MS CARRICK: Did they highlight any concerns about the conduct of Dr McNeill?

Ms Lundy: No.

MS CARRICK: In the referees’ reports, it does not say at what level they are. It redacts the person, which is fair enough, but it also redacts the position, so we cannot see at what level the referees were. But two of the referees’ reports said that Dr McNeill had been moved to special projects in late 2024. Did that raise any red flags for the board?

Ms Lundy: No, but we were curious about that, through the recruitment process, and we sought clarification of why that was the case, and it was to allow that special project work to be undertaken. We were not advised at the time it was because it related to anything else that would cause us concern.

MS CARRICK: Did you find out how long the special project work was to go on for, the end date, and when Dr McNeill was expected back in her substantive position?

Ms Lundy: Not specifically through the course of inquiries, but there was nothing to alert us that there was an issue or a concern about being placed on a special project for a period of time. Because that led into the recruitment process and her subsequent resignation, it never came up as an item of interest or concern.

MS CARRICK: Did you have a risk register with the recruitment that looked at what the risks were for the recruitment, given that special projects in the public service is a bit of a red flag?

Ms Lundy: Ms Carrick, I can assure you and the whole committee that not only the selection panel but the board, at a later date, had the opportunity to ask all of the questions. We were absolutely managing a risk of potential concern or issues about the quality of our candidate, and we were reassured at every stage that there were no issues.

MS CARRICK: Who reassured you?

Ms Lundy: On several occasions, it was Dr McNeill herself. As I have said previously, she has since demonstrated that she was under instructions not to disclose any information about the ongoing investigation and that, in fact, it would conclude upon her resignation. I do not want to speak on behalf of Dr McNeill; that is not my role. But I think it is fair and reasonable for me to at least relay that information to the committee, given that it is relevant to your questioning.

MS CARRICK: When there were two referees' reports that had mentioned the special projects, did you contact those referees yourself to flesh that out a bit—what that all meant?

Ms Lundy: No, because we had no concern. It was not unusual for people to be appointed to special projects. There had obviously been lots going on in the TAFE sector—there still is—in relation to harmonisation, different changes happening with registration and the surrounding rules. Dr McNeill had really strong credentials in an area of expertise that was of interest to us. In fact, part of that work was looking at how those federal frameworks and rules would be applying to TAFEs in the future, and this was seen as a relevant and positive attribute of our candidate in the role.

MS CARRICK: Have you received any complaints since Dr McNeill has been CEO of CIT?

Ms Lundy: Not specifically, that I am aware of, from CIT. The matters on which we have received information from time to time—I have already taken on notice looking at what other complaints we have received—have been in relation to her previous employment in a different jurisdiction, at New South Wales TAFE.

MS CARRICK: What remediation do you have, in light of the findings in New South Wales?

Ms Lundy: First and foremost—and I did make this clear when I have spoken publicly previously—I think it is a fair process to allow the legal action that is currently underway to roll out. It makes it really difficult for Dr McNeill, I am sure, but she will

represent herself in the way she can, with the constraints of that legal action that she has underway.

From the board's point of view, we have looked at every perspective of this, about what action we are able to take, and we have sought advice on that from appropriate sources. Given that her performance under her current contract of employment is very strong, we have no concerns about her performance, her ability to take the action she said she would be able to take, and perform in the way she said she would be able to perform, in accordance with her application and her referee reports. We have no grounds to take any action on that basis at this point in time as a board.

MS CARRICK: Are you aware of what the breaches were in New South Wales?

Ms Lundy: We have some information that has been provided in confidence, following the publication of the judgement that brought this story into the public domain, that related to an action by Dr McNeill that did not stand up. That information led to us having some more idea, I suppose, of the issues involved.

MS CARRICK: Because that decision was about whether she had standing or not to go to Fair Work—

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS CARRICK: as opposed to the decision by the New South Wales commission that did the inquiry and found that she was in breach. Do you have the decision from the inquiry that found she was in breach?

Ms Lundy: With the decision from the inquiry, there was a report, as I understand it, from the legal firm that was conducting that inquiry, and we have been provided with some of that information in confidence.

MS CARRICK: Okay; thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Clay?

MS CLAY: I will go on from there. What is the nature of the findings?

Ms Lundy: With the general nature of the findings—and I am very cautious, as I feel I am at risk of providing information that is currently under sub judice, because it is before the Supreme Court of New South Wales—my general understanding is that the matters relate largely to the perceptions of conflict of interest, and perceptions of conflict of interest in relation to employment and contracts.

MS CLAY: The web form complaint that was sent to the Integrity Commission, which I assume was what was sent to you in June last year, is that what started—

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS CLAY: That is now in the public domain?

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS CLAY: There is quite a lot—40 categories—of wrongdoing that warranted investigation and quite a long list of things in that. Is that an accurate reflection of what is on foot at the moment? You may not be able to say; that is okay.

Ms Lundy: No, I am not a lawyer.

MS CLAY: That is okay.

Ms Lundy: I would prefer not to comment on that at all, other than to say that the information we have seen relates to a long list of complaints of the nature that I have described—conflict of interest, conduct in the business.

MS CLAY: In June last year, you were put on notice by an anonymous complaint—

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS CLAY: regarding a number of allegations about Dr McNeill. What did you do in June last year to check that CIT would be risk-proof from those types of complaints? If you need me to prompt you, I can prompt your memory with the types of complaints. They are pretty extensive—salaries, budgets, maladministration of staff. There is quite a number of things.

THE CHAIR: That is not necessarily proven. That is in a complaint that was put forward.

MS CLAY: It is in the complaint, but the complaint was put to the board, and I am wondering what the board did to make sure that CIT—

Ms Lundy: I think I have already answered that, in that when you receive anonymous complaints, it is very difficult for any jurisdiction to act upon them. We set about asking the relevant jurisdictions if they had any factual information in relation to any actual investigations. I have already described to Mr Parton the actions we took at that time in trying to seek further information about those allegations.

I think it is appropriate for me to make the comment that anyone can make an allegation and, because of CIT's history, we have been meticulous in how we address those allegations and respond to anonymous complaints. We believe that we took every action possible to make sure that the appropriate jurisdictions, both here and New South Wales, were aware of those allegations and that we were seeking further information to validate them and assess what impact it would have on Dr McNeill's employment with us.

Given everything that we had seen, we are very confident—and I am more than happy to step you through the whole recruitment process—that we had employed someone with the requisite skills to perform their duties. As I have said many times now, regardless of what that history in that other jurisdiction is, Dr McNeill continues to perform her duties to our satisfaction. It creates a real challenge for the board in separating her current performance and obligations under her contract of employment

and the information that should or should not have been provided or been made available for us to consider relating to previous employment and investigations underway.

MS CLAY: Ms Lundy, that sounds very reassuring. What I am trying to find out is: you are saying that you are 100 per cent confident in Dr McNeill's performance. I am trying to find out what proactive steps you took, in the light of some allegations, that give you that 100 per cent confidence. You have said you went to check with regulators to see if these allegations were true, but what have you done within CIT? You are saying that you are very confident in Dr McNeill's performance—

Ms Lundy: Do we have policies in place to ensure that these things cannot happen in CIT?

MS CLAY: I am probably specifically saying: when you received this, last year in June, did you say, "There are a few things we should check that Dr McNeill is performing on well within CIT now"?

Ms Lundy: I am sorry; now I understand your question. We are completely confident that the actions described in the anonymous allegations are not being continued by Dr McNeill in her current employment.

MS CLAY: How are you completely confident in that?

Ms Lundy: Because we monitor those policies and that conduct.

MS CLAY: How do you monitor them? Do you monitor them by asking Dr McNeill or do you monitor them by some other means?

Ms Lundy: We monitor them by our general governance oversight, certainly by asking questions of employees and monitoring processes through our structures within the CIT.

MS CLAY: The same kind of general governance oversight we have seen with CIT over the last few years or a different type of governance oversight?

Ms Lundy: I think it has been particularly strong over the last few years. Ms Clay, you will recall that CIT had a matter referred by the Assembly to the Integrity Commission, and that certainly sharpened up our governance and financial management processes very sharply. I am absolutely confident that those processes have remained strong.

MS CLAY: Ms Lundy, would you like to take on notice looking at the specific allegations that were in that set of allegations made through the Integrity Commission in June, and come back to us on notice on the specific policies and governance things that give you so much confidence that these things are not being done in CIT? Is that possible?

Ms Lundy: I think I can take that on notice, yes.

MS CLAY: That would be great; thank you. The committee has received the

application from Dr McNeill. My colleague Ms Carrick has already opened up the special projects topic. There was another one that jumped out at me. It said, “Dr McNeill said, ‘On a personal note, it’s an ideal time to relocate to the ACT.’” The next sentence was redacted. I am interested to know what that next sentence was and whether it is relevant to the current situation.

Ms Lundy: I would say it is absolutely not relevant, and it related to reflecting on members of her family.

MS CLAY: That would be fine. Can you take on notice and confirm that that is purely personal information that has been redacted and that it is not—

Ms Lundy: I can confirm it now.

MS CLAY: Okay. That is all good. Section 84 of the Financial Management Act says that a CEO must immediately advise the board of significant events when they occur. Do you think there have been any significant events that Dr McNeill should have had a proactive role in advising you of, at any point since May last year until now?

Ms Lundy: It has only been Dr McNeill that has brought these matters to our attention. It has not been anybody else, apart from the original anonymous allegations being referred to us. Following that, the conversation occurred. It has been Dr McNeill that has been proactive in bringing information to the board about the status of her legal action and information she has received from TAFE New South Wales.

MS CLAY: But the original one, in June last year, that was not Dr McNeill bringing it to your attention?

Ms Lundy: Sorry, what are you referring to?

MS CLAY: In June last year, you received information from the Integrity Commission about an allegation. That came from the Integrity Commission, didn’t it?

Ms Lundy: Yes, it did, and it was following our correspondence resulting from that notification from the Integrity Commission that TAFE New South Wales gave Dr McNeill permission to tell the board that there was an investigation. We still received nothing from TAFE New South Wales. It was Dr McNeill that then brought that information forward because she believed she had been authorised to provide that disclosure at that point in time.

MS CLAY: When was the first time that you became aware of the allegations? What was the very first instance? Was that from Dr McNeill?

Ms Lundy: The allegations were from the anonymous letter that were referred to us from the Integrity Commission, yes.

MS CLAY: Not from Dr McNeill.

Ms Lundy: The first we were notified that the investigation had continued was from Dr McNeill.

MS CLAY: Okay, and you—

Ms Lundy: After she was authorised by TAFE New South Wales to disclose.

MS CLAY: You had another round of conversations with Dr McNeill in October about the status of those allegations; is that right?

Ms Lundy: I would have to take on notice the specific date but, yes, she brought further information back to the board.

MS CLAY: What was the nature of the information that she brought back to the board?

Ms Lundy: Further information she brought back to the board was that she was undertaking legal action—that the investigation was continuing or that there had been findings. I will take that detail on notice.

MS CLAY: On 27 October, there was a letter from you to the minister advising of a further anonymous complaint which said that the investigation was complete and serious wrongdoing or misconduct was found. Have I got that right?

Ms Lundy: I would have to check the correspondence. I have it here.

MS CLAY: It sounds like it is another source of information that came to you not through Dr McNeill.

Ms Lundy: Yes. I will take that on notice, just to make sure that I get the timing right, but we were certainly satisfied that Dr McNeill was making that information available to us, to the best of her ability, given the legal constraints she was under.

THE CHAIR: If you want to ask a question for Ms Lundy to take on notice, you can do so now, if you do it quickly.

MS CLAY: Sure. I would love to know what was the source of the information that you got, from whom, in October, November and December about the allegations, whether those sources came from outside or whether they came from Dr McNeill, and whether they said there were ongoing allegations, whether there were proven findings, or whether they said there was nothing to see.

Ms Lundy: Okay. We will capture that. We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Lundy. Ms Tough?

MS TOUGH: Thank you, Chair. Following on from Ms Clay—and it might be part of what you take on notice, or you might be able to answer it here—Ms Lundy, that letter that you sent to the minister in October 2025 talks about receiving the further anonymous complaint. It says that you then wrote to TAFE New South Wales to seek an update, and TAFE responded only with an authorisation for Dr McNeill to provide you and the board with further information—

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS TOUGH: which says that you did, and she provided information that the information provided in the anonymous complaint was false. Did you then follow up with TAFE New South Wales on what she had said, just to corroborate her information? Given TAFE had said that you could ask Dr McNeill, and you asked Dr McNeill, did you then close the loop back to TAFE?

Ms Lundy: I will take that on notice, but our correspondence with TAFE New South Wales had consistently been, “We can’t give you any information,” all the way through. I will take it on notice, because it is very likely that we would have written that piece of correspondence.

MS TOUGH: Thank you. On the anonymous complaint, going back to the June one, and that second one in October, if you had not received that anonymous complaint, that tip-off through the Integrity Commission, was there any point in Dr McNeill’s tenure—to today, so far—where you think this would have become knowledge, and that it would have been shared with the board at any point before the legal proceedings—

Ms Lundy: I do not think I can answer that because, clearly, the carriage of natural justice through the right to challenge findings would have played out. I am not sure, and we have grappled with when, at what point, we would have found out, if we had not really pressed with our inquiries as soon as we were alerted to something.

MS TOUGH: Touching back on what Ms Carrick mentioned about the APS Code of Conduct, obviously, that recruitment is done. Going forward for CIT, do you think that when recruitment is undertaken, for firms that are successful in conducting nationwide recruitment, that the pro forma forms they use might be potentially changed to capture a broader remit?

Ms Lundy: Potentially. Ms Tough, it is a really great point, and it is something that I have grappled with—I think we all do—in looking at this situation. If you were hypothetically subject to a misconduct allegation that you were challenging, and in the process of challenging, you are suggesting that that is an automatic preclusion for anyone to seek employment during that period of time, because if you tick “yes” on any box, you are prejudicing yourself, regardless of the veracity of the allegation or the process that is underway to resolve it. It is a really good question, and I think better minds than mine will turn themselves to that.

I worry that we now exist in an environment where, regardless of the nature or extent of the allegation, once it is made and there is a process, you are suggesting that that would preclude you from changing jobs, applying for a job, because you would be obligated to tick a box saying that there was an investigation underway. I am not sure whether that is the right outcome. Potentially, it is for CIT, given the spectacle that CIT has become with these issues.

I still stand by the position that the board conducted the recruitment in an exemplary fashion. We made decisions upon the information we received, and we are still in a position to have confidence in the performance of the CIT employee employed under the contract of employment, which she is. That is notwithstanding historical matters

relating to a previous jurisdiction that have progressed in a different way to what the CEO has understood. As she has been permitted to disclose information, I certainly feel that she has made her best effort to do that, while still protecting her position and her right to take that legal action.

MS TOUGH: I do not think I was quite suggesting that it would be precluding someone from applying for a job; it is just that the APS Code of Conduct is one particular public sector code of conduct, and there are so many others around the country, so—

Ms Lundy: Certainly, yes. It still has the same effect, though.

MS TOUGH: Yes, it is just—

Ms Lundy: It still has the same effect. There is a natural justice element here that is, I think, of more general concern, not necessarily specifically here, which means that, whilst ever complaints can be made, you are locked out of prospects of employment, given that level of scrutiny. I think it is reasonable to take the point that we will continue, as an organisation, to apply the utmost diligence to our recruiting methods going forward.

MS TOUGH: You have taken on notice what you wrote to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner and when that happened?

Ms Lundy: Yes.

MS CARRICK: You mentioned that you think the breaches were conflict of interest, primarily. Did Dr McNeill ever provide you with the decision from New South Wales that stated what she was found in breach of, and why they changed her from a resignation to a termination? Did you ever receive that document?

Ms Lundy: Dr McNeill has provided us with some information that relates to both the judgement that was handed down and information that gives the board a better feel for what she is challenging and why. That information has been received in confidence. Because of the sub judice, I am not in a position to comment further on that, as those issues are the very issues that are the subject of her legal action with TAFE New South Wales.

MS CLAY: On Ms Tough's line of questioning, the recruitment process asks, "Are you currently under investigation for breaching the APS Code of Conduct?" Dr McNeill said, "No," because, presumably, she was not. You have then given us a lot of information about how you think it is a bit unfair for natural justice to ask people to fill it in. Are you saying that there is a reason we should ask whether someone is under investigation for the APS Code of Conduct but not for other public sector—

Ms Lundy: No, not at all.

MS CLAY: codes of conduct or other criminal investigations? Surely, there should just be a generic, "Are you under investigation for breaching any codes or standards that apply"?

Ms Lundy: Ms Clay, I am not disagreeing with that. I was merely raising the consequences of that being a rule in general fairness and procedural fairness for people. I am not—

MS CLAY: Surely, the consequence would be an opportunity for you to get more information about the matter that is ticked?

Ms Lundy: Indeed it would.

MR PARTON: Dr McNeill was told on 16 September that the TAFE investigation was complete, and the findings were made against her. Did she notify the CIT Board at that point that findings had been made against her? If not, when did she notify?

Ms Lundy: I will take that specifically on notice, because I do not have all the correspondence in front of me.

MR PARTON: I understand. You do not want to get it wrong.

Ms Lundy: No. I will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Finally, at any point during the recruitment process and/or during the interview, did Dr McNeill give any indication that there was a change to her employment, her duties or working conditions?

Ms Lundy: She certainly described how she was doing the special projects. There was not any question raised about why that was the case or that there was any motivation. As I said before, there seemed to be a good professional motivation to use her specialised skills in that area—at least, that was the observation at the time.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, we would like to thank you for your attendance today. There were quite a few questions taken on notice. If you can work your magic on them, that would be good. Please provide them back to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. I remind members that, if you wish to put any questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible, and no later than five business days from today. Once again, thank you for attending this afternoon, and have a good afternoon.

Ms Lundy: Thanks very much.

Short suspension

PETTERSSON, MR MICHAEL, Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries,
Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and
Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to our second session for today. We welcome Mr Michael Pettersson, Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. Please note that you are protected by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

We will not start with opening statements or anything like that. I would like to hand to Mr Parton to start.

MR PARTON: Thank you, Chair. Mr Pettersson, in an email dated 19 June 2025 to the CIT Board, your chief of staff said: “I have discussed this with the minister, who agrees the Public Sector Standards Commission is the appropriate entity to consider these matters. While it may have already been included, we ask that the referral ask the commissioner to consider Dr McNeill’s conduct during the recruitment process.” Minister, was this matter referred to the Public Sector Standards Commission? And, if so, on what date?

Mr Pettersson: Thank you, Mr Parton. The CIT advised that the CIT Board chair wrote to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner on 17 June 2025 and 27 October 2025, bringing this matter to their attention. The Public Sector Standards Commissioner replied on 3 July 2025 and 29 October 2025, noting the inquiries the board was making and steps the board was taking on the allegations.

MR PARTON: Thank you. In question time last week, in response to a question—in fact, you made that redundant, which is what you want to hear, isn’t it! Documents obtained from the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW show that Dr McNeill lodged an application for unfair dismissal against TAFE NSW on 14 January this year. A hearing was held this month, with the decision being handed down on 13 March. The documents also show that Dr McNeill provided a witness statement to the IRC on 24 February 2026. Minister, was Dr McNeill on leave from her position as CEO of the CIT when she was participating in her IRC action against TAFE NSW over the period of January to March this year?

Mr Pettersson: Thank you for the question, Mr Parton. I will take that on notice and seek advice from the CIT as to the nature of any leave requests. As you will appreciate, personal records for individual employees are a matter for the CIT and I do not have those available to me. I have taken that on notice and I will seek that answer for you.

MR PARTON: So you are telling me, Minister, that you took this question on notice in question time at the early part of last week, but you have no further information about it and you do not know whether she was on leave when the hearings were on?

Mr Pettersson: I have taken it on notice. I do not have that answer ready for the chamber yet, but, when I do, the chamber will be the first to hear it.

MR PARTON: Minister, New South Wales IRC documents show that TAFE NSW

advised Dr McNeill that their investigation was complete on 16 September last year and they found that Dr McNeill's conduct was contrary to the TAFE NSW code of conduct. What date did you find out that the TAFE NSW investigation had been completed and Dr McNeill had been found to have breached the TAFE NSW code of conduct?

Mr Pettersson: Good question, Mr Parton. I formally became aware in the correspondence from the CIT Board in December, which was provided to the chamber. The anonymous correspondence to the CIT Board—that was then—

MR PARTON: The Integrity Commissioner communication?

Mr Pettersson: Sorry—no. Let me rephrase that. Then the correspondence that I also tabled, where the CIT wrote to me to inform me of further anonymous correspondence that they had raised, would have been my first time of grappling with that idea.

MR PARTON: I am trying to get a handle on the timeline. The TAFE NSW investigation concluded on 16 September. You found out formally three months later. Did you find out formally from the CIT Board?

Mr Pettersson: My understanding of these events is clearly displayed in the correspondence between me and the CIT Board. I am not in a position to juxtapose that with the findings and the agreed statement of facts in New South Wales.

MR PARTON: Does it concern you that the TAFE NSW investigation was complete and findings were handed down on 16 September, but you were not formally advised of those findings for three months?

Mr Pettersson: Can you be more specific with the question?

MR PARTON: I am just asking whether that concerns you—whether you have concerns specifically about the CIT Board filling you in on that finding. I do not know exactly when the CIT Board became aware of that finding, but there seems to be a great hole in knowledge that you should have been provided as minister.

Mr Pettersson: I expect all boards that report to me to provide appropriate information and to do so in a timely manner.

MR PARTON: In a letter from the chair to you on 27 October 2025, which I think you have just alluded to, the chair of the CIT Board said: “I have written to TAFE NSW to seek an update on their investigation and requesting advice as to whether the TAFE NSW investigations are complete and if their findings are against Dr McNeill. TAFE NSW has responded only with authorisation for Dr McNeill to provide advice. I have discussed this with Dr McNeill and she has advised that the information provided in the anonymous complaint is false.” Minister, given that we now know from the New South Wales IRC documents that TAFE NSW advised Dr McNeill on 16 September that their investigation was complete—they found that Dr McNeill's conduct was contrary to the TAFE NSW code of conduct—do you accept that Dr McNeill misled the chair when she discussed this matter directly with her on 27 October 2025, given the chair's letter did not confirm that Dr McNeill had advised her about the outcome of the TAFE NSW

investigation?

Mr Pettersson: I appreciate the line of questioning, Mr Parton, and the answer you are seeking. I understand the line of questioning. I will simply remark that I sought the commissioning of an independent review of the board's processes, following the finding of misconduct, to consider a wide array of relevant matters.

MR PARTON: I appreciate that you understand the question. I am not saying that in a condescending way, Mr Pettersson. I am sorry. But this letter from the chair to you was on 27 October. It is more than a month after the findings were made. Does it seem apparent to you that Dr McNeill misled the chair when she discussed this matter directly with her on 27 October, because a vast array of information that is extremely important to this case is left out of that?

Mr Pettersson: I have been responding to the information provided to me, which is well-documented in the correspondence between the board and me. I am not going to speculate on the wider totality of conversations. All information was appropriately canvassed in the summation of what was provided to me. I, throughout this sequence of events, have held a concern. That concern deepened with time, which led to the commissioning of an independent review.

MR PARTON: Do you retain full confidence in the CIT Board or has that confidence waned in this period?

Mr Pettersson: I appreciate the invitation to provide commentary of that nature. I have been clear. I do still hold confidence in the board, because I believe that they still maintain the power to ensure community confidence. I have sought the commissioning of an independent review to inform my decision-making in relation to the board.

MR PARTON: What is the length of term that Dr McNeill has been appointed to as the CEO, Mr Pettersson?

Mr Pettersson: I will take that on notice. I believe it is in the contract.

MR PARTON: At this stage, as you sit before us on 30 March 2026, do you believe that she will run that full contract?

Mr Pettersson: You are asking me for an opinion, Mr Parton, and I cannot indulge questions of that nature.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: We have had a CIT CEO who was found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct, and then the successor, Dr McNeill, had been found to have engaged in misconduct in her previous role. So are you considering some governance reform?

Mr Pettersson: Thank you, Ms Carrick. That is an interesting question. For a long time, there has been a conversation about the appropriate governance arrangements of the CIT. The governing board itself is not a long institution in the life of the CIT. For an organisation with an age of nearly 100 years and for a governing board that has been in

place for only about 10 years, questions about what the appropriate structures are have been ongoing for some time. In light of these immediate events, that has not been central in the work of government, but I appreciate the interest of members in alternative systems of governance.

MS CARRICK: Ms Lundy mentioned a lot of documents that are in confidence and have not been provided to the committee. Have those documents been provided to you?

Mr Pettersson: Thank you for the question, Ms Carrick. In the Assembly, Mr Parton, very helpfully, got up under standing order 213A and sought documents, and I have provided the chamber with documents relating to these matters.

MS CARRICK: It was in addition to those. Those were mostly letters back and forth. This is about documents that the CIT has received from New South Wales and various places she referred to—documents that she has received. We asked, “Have you received these?” and she said they had been received. Assumably, you do not have anything in addition to the 213A; otherwise, it would have been provided.

Mr Pettersson: There was one thing that was not included and was made reference to. There was a copy of some legal advice that was attached to an email, and it was not provided for legal privilege reasons. Documents relating to the employment of individuals within the public sector are not normally the purview of ministers.

MS CARRICK: Are you concerned about the sufficiency of the level of ministerial and parliamentary oversight permitted by the current governance arrangements?

Mr Pettersson: Am I concerned?

MS CARRICK: Yes—about the sufficiency of the level of ministerial and parliamentary oversight?

Mr Pettersson: I think previous and current events draw an understandable level of cynicism about the current arrangements.

MS CARRICK: The application form—and I appreciate that the application form is well below your visibility—asked whether the applicant had been under investigation in the APS. Do you think that should be broadened to ask whether someone has been under investigation in any jurisdiction?

Mr Pettersson: I appreciate the question and I understand exactly where the question has come from. I am not going to offer a view on the documents of individual recruiting consultancies. I await findings and recommendations from the committee as to their observations on matters of that nature.

MS CARRICK: The referees’ reports that were done for Dr McNeill included reference to Dr McNeill being transferred to special projects from December 2024. Are you concerned that the board did not follow this reference up properly? “Special projects” in the public service can have a derogatory implication.

Mr Pettersson: Thank you for the question. My concern throughout these matters has

deepened, which is why I commissioned an independent review of these processes. That speaks to the seriousness these matters require. It also underpins what I hope would be my visible concern regarding these matters.

MS CARRICK: Would you expect the board to follow up a reference like being transferred to special projects or to just leave it to the recruitment agency?

Mr Pettersson: I expect my board, whichever one it may be, to conduct all of their affairs with appropriate candour and due diligence. I have sought the advice of the board, as to the steps that they have taken, and I have ultimately commissioned an independent review.

MS CARRICK: Do you think that Dr McNeill should provide to the board the New South Wales decision outlining the breach so that they can be informed for future events?

Mr Pettersson: I appreciate the line of questioning. You are seeking an opinion in that question, which—

MS CARRICK: Or do you think the board should have asked Dr McNeill for a copy of the decision so that they can be informed?

Mr Pettersson: To that question as well, I am not going to provide a running commentary on their specific actions. I have expressed the concern I held, which is why I commissioned an independent review of the actions. I am awaiting the response.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS CLAY: Minister, Kate Lundy wrote to you on 17 June with the first round of the anonymous allegations, and you wrote back on 21 July. That is a pretty big gap. Was there a conversation in that time or is that just the natural course of how long it takes you to respond to a matter like that?

Mr Pettersson: Not to make light of the situation, but I have had some correspondence with your office where it took a while to get a response as well.

MS CLAY: Yes.

Mr Pettersson: On a more serious note, though, I believe the response to the first correspondence is best viewed in two parts. There were the initial views from my office, which are visible in the emails, and then the formal correspondence followed later, upon seeking advice more fulsomely of the public service and receiving appropriate instructions on drafting.

MS CLAY: What happened between 17 June and 21 July? Were there conversations or—

Mr Pettersson: I do not believe so. I will check my records and I will come back and correct that, if that is not the case. We received an email alerting us to these matters. You can see the email thread as we sought to respond to that. I then worked through the

public service to draft a more fulsome response in letter form, which is the second piece you are referring to.

MS CLAY: Then you got a response to your 21 July letter on 18 August, which again is a quite long gap. I am interested that it is taking five or six weeks to action matters that come to your attention relating to the integrity of the CEO of the CIT, given recent events. It seems like a long delay.

Mr Pettersson: It is a fair observation. We do not operate as quickly as I think members in the wider community would hope, nor to the standards that we as ministers would like either. I would love to be able to respond quickly and fulsomely in every circumstance. Matters of this gravity require very considered responses. Seeking to balance responding to what is an anonymous allegation, appropriate processes and the processes of the ACT government can sometimes lead to a response taking slightly longer.

MS CLAY: Does it meet your expectations that it might take the CIT Board five or six weeks to respond to a letter of that nature?

Mr Pettersson: As a government, our ability to respond in a timely way frequently attracts criticism, so I am not in a position to throw stones at others for the speed at which they respond. I would observe that most boards do not meet weekly. Commonly, they might meet monthly. So I can understand that, in the natural cycle of a board's calendar, their responses could be shaped by that.

MS CLAY: Kate Lundy told you in that correspondence that references included those from TAFE NSW. Did anyone in your office seek to sight a copy of them or do any due diligence on them, given the nature of the matter?

Mr Pettersson: No. I understand my responsibilities as a minister and how they relate to the board. I also understand the board's responsibilities and how they relate to the CEO. I do not conduct my affairs by doing the work of others. It is the board's responsibility to recruit and manage the CEO, so I would not seek to do that work for them.

MS CLAY: Did anyone in your office check the New South Wales government probity register, ICAC, TAFE NSW—any of the regulators that were mentioned in the correspondence?

Mr Pettersson: It is not the role of me as a minister or, by extension, my office to conduct investigations. I appreciate a view that they would maybe like to see that, but I do not think it is appropriate for ministers to conduct investigations of that nature themselves.

MS CLAY: You have asked for an independent review in December. What is the independent review looking at?

Mr Pettersson: In December 2025, I asked the head of service to arrange for an independent review of the recruitment process that led to the appointment of the CIT CEO and consider the conduct of both the CIT Board and the appointee and, in

particular, if any issues of probity arise. At a minimum, the review will set out the timing and facts of the recruitment process for the CIT CEO, identify any probity issues relating to the recruitment process, investigate what due diligence was undertaken by the recruitment selection panel and the CIT Board during the recruitment process, and form a view as to the adequacy of the probity and/or due diligence actions taken.

MS CLAY: Who is doing that independent review? What is the role?

Mr Pettersson: The territory has engaged Carmel McGregor Consulting to conduct the review.

MS CLAY: That sounds like you have now appointed someone to do those checks that you said were not really part of your role as a minister, which I appreciate. As of December, you thought that was perhaps a role that you should step into and that you should make sure that those checks were conducted. That has changed?

Mr Pettersson: No. I want to be clear. When I step out what my responsibilities are, it is not that I or my staff engage in investigations, but, instead, if we form a view that something needs to be reviewed, we engage the appropriate structures utilised in the public service for that work to be undertaken, and for that to then provide advice to me to inform my decisions in relation to the board.

MS CLAY: The board has continued to say that they remain satisfied with Dr McNeill's performance and leadership. Do you think the fact that you have commissioned an independent review of this process has any interaction with that statement?

Mr Pettersson: Can you be more precise with the question, Ms Clay?

MS CLAY: The board continues to hold confidence in Dr McNeill's performance and leadership. Are there any concerns from your end, Minister?

Mr Pettersson: I do not have a direct employment relationship to the CIT CEO. My relationship is to the board. I have sought the commissioning of an independent review to consider these matters for many of the reasons I have described already.

MS CLAY: The chair is required to keep you informed of any significant events and any information that is relevant. Do you think that has happened during the course of this? And is your independent review likely to find that the chair kept you informed?

Mr Pettersson: I eagerly await the independent review. I am not going to speculate on what it contains or what it will find, but I assure members I am eagerly awaiting it. I commissioned it in December. There is a certain level of frustration about the time a review of this nature has taken, but I want to make sure that I respond appropriately at each stage of this process, so I will not pre-empt the review that I commissioned.

MS CLAY: When will it report?

Mr Pettersson: Imminently. I understand that drafts have been circulated. That is the most recent update that I have.

MS CLAY: Will it be public?

Mr Pettersson: I do not have a view to that yet. I strongly suspect there will be many interested parties, potentially within the Assembly, that would seek access to that information.

THE CHAIR: Do not look at me, mate!

Mr Pettersson: We do not need to pre-empt that question, but I have no doubt that it is coming, and I am confident that there are appropriate ways to navigate through that when those requests are made.

MS CLAY: This committee was given the contract that Dr McNeill was appointed under. I had a quick look at that. I was not familiar with the contract for the former CEO of the CIT, but I did have a little look at the termination clauses in this one. Do you think there have been any governance reforms between those two contracts in order to protect the territory's interests? Feel free if that is a question to take on notice. It might be a more detailed question.

Mr Pettersson: I will take that on notice. Most of the governance reforms that come to mind when thinking about changes in recent years in response to events have gone to procurement processes. It would not surprise me if there have been changes to things like the contract as well, but I will take it on notice to see if there is some guidance I can provide.

MS CLAY: Can you perhaps take on notice what, if any, governance reforms occurred since the former CEO Leanne Cover—not to procurement but to the CIT and operations?

Mr Pettersson: I am very happy to do that.

MS CLAY: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: Minister, how many anonymous complaints did you or your office receive, through the Integrity Commission, through the board or through any other sources. How many?

Mr Pettersson: I received a copy of the Integrity Commission complaint in the June correspondence from the board. It was attached to it. In subsequent correspondence, there is a clear reference to Integrity Commission correspondence, but that was not provided.

MS TOUGH: The one alluded to in the board's letter was in, I think, October, where they said they received an anonymous complaint. That was not one that you also received, separately?

Mr Pettersson: No.

MS TOUGH: Fair enough. In the chief of staff's email in July, he suggests to the board

GSO advice, talking to the Public Service Standards Commissioner and potentially an independent review—laying out different options the board could undertake. It seems clear that they did not do an independent review and that you have subsequently, in December, got the process started for that. Do you know what actions they did take after getting those suggestions from the chief of staff?

Mr Pettersson: It is a question probably best answered by the CIT Board. My understanding of events that have transpired are best articulated in the correspondence that has been provided to the committee. That is my understanding of events and how that has progressed. I would direct you to that to ascertain my understanding of events.

MS TOUGH: Do you know, though, if they did get GSO advice?

Mr Pettersson: Yes. As I made reference to in an earlier answer, that was the one document that could not be provided under the 213A that Mr Parton moved, because that contained legal advice from GSO.

MS TOUGH: Thank you. All the actions you have taken are in the correspondence. Have there been times when you have suggested the board take up certain courses of action or suggested certain next steps for them and, when they wrote back to you, they have potentially not done those things—when you have tried to suggest to them to maybe keep going with these inquiries or double-check with TAFE NSW or try to make sure that they are doing their due diligence, without overstepping your role as minister to the board?

Mr Pettersson: Great question, Ms Tough. One of the natural tensions that exists with the creation of independent governing boards is that they are independent governing boards and they are empowered to make decisions removed from the whims of executive government. There are many reasons government structures of that nature are created, but it would be remiss not to, in a moment like this, reflect on some of the tensions that are created as well. As minister, I try to engage constructively with all of my boards, seeking to share views or ask questions, as appropriate, whilst ensuring that I do not issue a direction. The act makes very clear the constraints that exist around that.

MS TOUGH: Under the act, you do not have the power to direct the board; just to communicate with the board on what actions they should take in relation to staffing?

Mr Pettersson: There are very tightly constrained provisions around directions. I will refer to my notes. The minister may tell the CIT, following consultation, the general policies that are to apply to the CIT, and the CIT must ensure, as far as is practicable, that it complies with the policies. Under section 7 of the CIT Act, the minister may give a direction to the CIT in relation to its functions—those are set out in section 6 of the CIT Act—and the CIT must comply with the direction. While section 7 of the CIT Act allows the minister to give directions to the CIT in relation to the exercise of its functions, these powers are limited and do not extend to directing the board in relation to individual employment matters or interfering with the board's independent governance responsibilities.

MS TOUGH: Fair enough. When you were made aware that Dr McNeill was going to be hired as the CEO, way back before any of this happened, did you get oversight of all

the top candidates or just the preferred candidate in the process? Obviously you have no say in who will be the candidate, but what kinds of steps are you involved in?

Mr Pettersson: The recruitment process takes many months. My involvement in it is that I am consulted by the board. I believe that correspondence was included in the 213A. The board seeks to consult with me. I respond, outlining what I view as important attributes of a future candidate. There is correspondence back and forth, where I am made aware of updates in how their recruitment process is going. To be more specific, I had one phone call where the CIT Board chair outlined who their final candidates were and outlined their relevant experiences. I thanked the CIT Board chair for providing me an update and, once again, reiterated the key priorities I believed the holder of that position should uphold, and I was subsequently made aware of the board's decision.

MS TOUGH: I cannot find the correspondence, but those attributes were about ensuring the integrity of the CIT and making sure it is a trusted public institution after previous events?

Mr Pettersson: I believe all members of the Assembly want the CIT to be at the heart of our vocational education system. Central to that is community confidence, and I believe the CEO has an important role to play in that.

MS CARRICK: Minister, do you have the power to request information from the board—for example, all the documents that they have in relation to this matter that nobody else has?

Mr Pettersson: I am not sure. That seems like a very open-ended question. I am not acutely aware of where the limits may lie in my ability to seek information from them. Are you referring to a particular type of document?

MS CARRICK: Ms Lundy mentioned a number of documents that were in confidence, and I am wondering if you are able, in your capacity as the minister, to ask for a copy of all the documents that the CIT has in relation to this matter to inform yourself and to ensure that you have a comfort level about the due diligence, and whether the review that you have commissioned is able to see these documents so that there can be a complete investigation.

Mr Pettersson: So I can understand the question, is the crux of the question about whether I can ask for the documents that the CIT has not provided to the committee?

MS CARRICK: To you—we would like them too—to the inquiry that you—

Mr Pettersson: I will take that on notice. I am no expert on parliamentary committees, but I believe the committee has a range of powers available to it to also compel documents.

MS CARRICK: This is not so much from the committee's perspective but from the perspective of you, as the minister, asking the CIT Board for the documents that they have that you do not have, and whether you will ask for them.

Mr Pettersson: My hesitation in that line of questioning is that it is positioning me as an investigative body, as a minister. I would not want to be the investigator in these matters. I have sought the establishment of an independent review and for them to conduct that work. I am not aware of any issues that they have had in accessing information that they deem relevant.

MS CARRICK: Will you ask the independent review if they are able to access the documents referred to by Ms Lundy that she has in confidence?

Mr Pettersson: I could do that. I am not particularly inclined to do that, because I do not believe that there is a problem of that nature. If there were a problem in accessing information, that, I believe, would be brought to my attention quite promptly. But what has been reported to me is that the independent review has been able to engage constructively with parties.

MS CARRICK: They might not know about these documents.

MS CLAY: Minister, we have a number of concerns about heads of authorities and appointment processes. There was Leanne Cover, there was Gordon Ramsay, and there is now the current one on foot. Do you have any governance concerns or have governance lessons been learned about how the ACT government is running these boards at the moment, to ensure that the territory is getting good outcomes and good value for money from these senior positions?

Mr Pettersson: I will not offer a comment on matters before my time, and I will refrain from pre-empting the independent review that I have commissioned. That will be useful in shaping my views on the events of the past year.

MR PARTON: Mr Pettersson, you were alerted to serious concerns relating to complaints made against Dr McNeill before her appointment started, albeit a very short period of time before her appointment started. What options were open to you as the minister? Would you have had the power or the influence of the board to put that appointment on ice at that point? Did you consider that action? And, if so, why did you not?

Mr Pettersson: As I have made expressly clear, the employment of the CIT CEO is a question for the board. I do not have a direct relationship to that individual and am not in a position to make a decision on what you are asking. Your characterisation of the timelines is, I think, unhelpful.

MR PARTON: Is it correct, though? Is it true?

Mr Pettersson: I am happy to show why your characterisation is not accurate. The timeline of recruitment—

MR PARTON: It is, actually. You knew about the allegations prior to the appointment commencing. That is accurate.

Mr Pettersson: Would you like to hear my answer?

MR PARTON: Please.

Mr Pettersson: I am happy to outline the process. On 5 December 2024, the board chair wrote to me informing that the recruitment would commence shortly. On 11 April, the CIT Board chair wrote to me as minister to request consultation under the FMA. On 15 April, I met with the board chair. On 13 May, I wrote to the CIT Board chair with expectations of the CEO. I received an update on 16 May by phone as to their recruitment. On 20 May, the CIT Board secretariat advised my office that the selection panel advised Dr McNeill would be chosen as CEO. I had another meeting with the board chair on 22 May. On 27 May 2025, the CIT Board chair signed the appointment instrument of the CIT CEO. The board are the employers of the CEO. They hold that relationship. It is not a question for me.

On 4 June 2025, Dr McNeill was publicly announced as the incoming CIT CEO. On 5 June, the day after that public announcement, the ACT Integrity Commission received an anonymous complaint of alleged wrongdoing in TAFE NSW. On 8 June, the CIT Board received an anonymous complaint from the ACT Integrity Commission. Sorry—let me say that again. The CIT Board received—

MR PARTON: That was 8 June.

Mr Pettersson: On 8 June, the CIT Board received an anonymous complaint of alleged wrongdoing. On 13 June, the ACT Integrity Commission determined no relevant matters existed within the jurisdiction and formally disclosed the complaint to the CIT Board chair. On 17 June, the CIT Board chair provided a copy of the Integrity Commission's disclosure to my office. I appreciate your characterisation of that one particular day. I think it does a disservice to the events that preceded it.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you, Mr Pettersson, for your attendance today. You know the procedure. Regarding questions that you have taken on notice, please provide your answers to our committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. I thank witnesses, including Ms Lundy, who also attended the committee today, for their experience and knowledge. We also thank broadcasting and Hansard staff for their support. If any members would like to put questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible and no later than five business days from today. That concludes our public hearing.

The committee adjourned at 3.31 pm