

Back Pocket Brief B-B

Independent Media Inquiry (the Inquiry) – PM&C involvement in appointment of Dr Matthew Ricketson to conduct the Inquiry

Talking Points

Did PM&C provide briefing to the Prime Minister on the selection of Dr Ricketson to conduct the Inquiry?

- PM&C did not provide briefing to the Prime Minister on the selection of Dr Ricketson.

(if asked) Was Dr Ricketson's appointment considered by Cabinet, and if so, on what date?

- It is not appropriate for PM&C to confirm the specific items for decision before the Cabinet.

Background

On 16 May 2012, *The Australian* reported that an email (released under FOI), from Senator Conroy's office to the Prime Minister and Treasurer's chiefs of staff and other senior minister's staff, said "Please note that we know Matthew Ricketson well, he is extremely well regarded and we have a strong relationship with him." The article:

- implies that the email is evidence the Inquiry was not conducted independently from government and it quotes the Opposition communications spokesman, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, alleging that "What this document confirms is that for Senator Conroy and indeed the Prime Minister and Treasurer, this was an entirely political exercise from the start, designed to get the Greens off Labor's back and pay back News Limited"; and
- states that a spokesman for Senator Conroy said that all appointments to the Inquiry were agreed by Cabinet.

Senator Conroy announced the Inquiry publicly on 14 September 2011, including that it would:

- "be conducted independently of Government, led by Former Justice of the Federal Court of Australia, Ray Finkelstein QC, with the assistance of Dr

Matthew Ricketson, Professor of Journalism at Canberra University and a former practising journalist;

- focus on print media regulation, including online publications, and the operation of the Press Council; and
- provide its findings to the Convergence Review and the government would take a considered approach to the recommendations of both.

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May 2012

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