

PROOF



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SENATE

**ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

Reference: Matters arising from Telstra annual report 1995-9

CANBERRA

Tuesday, 24 June 1997

PROOF HANSARD REPORT

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ERC&A 36

SENATE—Legislation

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Mr White—Yes.

Senator O'CHEE—And what were you told in that induction briefing about the group's role?

Mr White—In the first induction—and I was one of the early ones, and probably the earliest in the Freehill's area—there were five complainants. They were Garms, Gill and Smith, and Dawson and Schorer. My induction briefing was that we—we being Telecom—had to stop these people to stop the floodgates being opened.

Senator O'CHEE—What, stop them reasonably or stop them at all costs—or what?

Mr White—The words used to me in the early days were that we had to stop these people at all costs.

Senator O'CHEE—So when you were told to do a document better, that meant to do a better job of stopping them at all costs?

Mr White—I would say explaining the information available to the best of my ability. That is the best way I can explain it.

Senator O'CHEE—To the satisfaction of—

Mr White—The team leader.

CHAIR—Mr White, were you ever expected to fabricate information or to misinterpret the evidence?

Mr White—No.

CHAIR—So you were asked to explain to the best of your ability, if this could be explained not as Telstra's mishandling of it but as an error that could be explained?

Mr White—I was never ever coerced to do something that was immoral or illegal.

Senator O'CHEE—Mr Pinnock, you just heard evidence of this group being established after the fast-track arbitration process was set up.

Mr Pinnock—I am not sure whether the evidence was that it was after it was set up. I understood it was to be at the same time. But in the event, I take your point on that, Senator.

Senator O'CHEE—You have just heard evidence about the activities of this

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Senator SCHACHT—'Stopped at all costs'—that was the phrase. Can you tell me who, at that induction briefing, said 'stopped at all costs'?

Mr White—Mr Peter Gamble, Peter Riddle.

Senator SCHACHT—Who?

Mr White—Mr Peter Gamble and a subordinate of his, Peter Riddle. That was the induction process—

Senator SCHACHT—Do you know whether they are still in those positions in the—

Mr White—I have no idea. I have been out of Telstra for two years.

Senator SCHACHT—Mr Ward, are those two gentlemen that Mr White has named still in those positions?

Mr Ward—I believe Mr Peter Gamble has left the company. I am not aware of the other—

Mr Benjamin—Mr Riddle is still in the company.

Senator SCHACHT—Is Mr Riddle still in the area, Mr Benjamin?

Mr Benjamin—Mr Riddle is still in the area, yes.

Senator SCHACHT—He is not present at the moment, is he?

Mr Benjamin—No.

Senator SCHACHT—Do you have any comment to make about Mr White's remarks that, at the induction ceremony, as he describes it, or briefing, it was said that these five cases had to be stopped at all costs?

Mr Benjamin—I am not personally aware of those remarks being made.

Senator SCHACHT—Mr Benjamin, it might be useful, if Mr Riddle is still an employee, to bring to his attention this evidence, and also to raise, not just with him but with other people, still employees, who were involved in those units, what they say about Mr White's evidence. Mr White has given his evidence and I fully support the right of people to respond if they have a different view about it, and I also reserve the right at a later stage when we may wish to call Mr Riddle.