

**All media enquiries regarding the below correspondence should be directed to the Chair, Hon Rod Roberts MLC on (02) 9230 3686.**

**From:** [Ross Neilson](#)  
**To:** [Caravan Incident](#)  
**Cc:** [Tilly South](#)  
**Subject:** Re-invitation to appear  
**Date:** Friday, 16 May 2025 4:46:16 PM

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Dear Lauren

Thank you for your email dated 13 May 2025, reiterating the Select Committee's invitation for myself and Ms South from our office to attend a hearing of its Inquiry into matters pertaining to the "Dural caravan incident".

For the reasons elucidated in my reply to the Committee's earlier invitation on 5 May 2025 (reproduced below for ease of reference), I again respectfully decline the invitation to attend the hearing, on my own behalf and that of Ms South.

Best regards,

**Ross Neilson**

Chief of Staff

**Office of the Hon Yasmin Catley MP**

**Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism**

**Minister for the Hunter**

**M**

**E**

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Sydney NSW 2000



**I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with NSW Government at this time.**

Please consider the environment before printing this email.

Dear Lauren

Thank you for your email dated 5 May 2025, requesting my attendance and that of my colleague Ms South at a hearing of the Select Committee Inquiry into matters related to the "Dural caravan incident" and its supposed relationship to parliamentary

debates.

It is my contention that it is a principle of Westminster democracy that Ministerial staff should not be compelled to appear before parliamentary committees, since it is Ministers, who are elected officials, who are subject to the scrutiny of Parliament and its Committees, not their staff.

This contention is supported by the New South Wales Legislative Council Practice, which affirms that "it is generally recognised that Ministerial staff should not be held accountable for the actions or policy decisions of Ministers or their departments, and they are not frequently summoned as witnesses". This recognises the distinct roles of Ministers and their staff who are elected and unelected respectively.

I further note that under the *Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901*, that the issuing of a summons is "an exercise of significant coercive power and should only occur after careful consideration of the repercussions and alternatives such as:

- a) whether the information can be obtained from another witness or by other means;
- b) whether the witness's non-attendance will diminish the quality of the evidence obtained by the committee; and
- c) the political ramifications of summoning a witness, particularly if the witness is a public officer or Ministerial adviser."

As already highlighted by the Premier on 29 April 2025 in correspondence to the Committee, the Government has already provided extensive public comment on the matters before the Inquiry, including within the Parliament. The Minister along with senior police were repeatedly questioned on the issue including at Budget Estimates Committee hearings.

The Government has also responded to a relevant Order under Standing Order 52 of the Legislative Council.

In the light of all this I am advising that I respectfully decline the Committee's invitation for Ms South and myself to attend the imminent hearing.

Regards,

**Ross Neilson**

Chief of Staff

**Office of the Hon Yasmin Catley MP**

**Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism**

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