



Attorney General's Office

Attorney General's Office
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Mr Paul Burns
By email: symbolseeker999@gmail.com

3 March 2015

Dear Mr Burns

I have been investigating your complaint concerning the way in which Ms Collins Rice handled your correspondence dated 22 January. Your complaint, addressed to the Attorney General, had 3 parts:

- “Your Ms Collins Rice breached her duty of strict confidentiality to you; to the Lord Chief Justice; in this matter to a senior member of his judiciary under scrutiny; and to me;
- She has failed to act responsibly by releasing this ‘sensitive correspondence’ as open correspondence to those below her in rank and thus setting a startlingly poor example in her breaches of the Civil Service Code of Conduct;
- She has failed the normal civility and courtesy expected in a senior member of the Civil Service which is to acknowledge the safe receipt of such correspondence.”

As part of the investigation I have reviewed the internal handling of your correspondence and the two replies you have received from this office. I have had full access to all correspondence and have carried out this investigation objectively based on the evidence.

Your complaint is based on the premise that in writing to this Department you are entitled to expect your letter to be treated in a particular way. In this case you demanded that it be seen only by Ms Collins Rice and that it was seen and dealt with by the Attorney General. That premise is mistaken. In writing to a public Department you cannot require that a letter is dealt with in any way other than in accordance with its internal procedures. Ms Collins Rice passed the letter to the Correspondence Unit here which acknowledged receipt. That unit sought assistance in drafting a response from the Deputy Legal Secretary, Kevin McGinty, who sent you a reply to the substantive issues raised on 25 January 2015. There is no basis, therefore, for the complaints you have made to be substantiated. In consequence my investigation has concluded that your correspondence was handled appropriately by Ms Collins Rice and by this department.

You have also asked two follow up questions, namely:

1. Within your organogram please identify your position in the department particularly in relation to your Director Ms Collins Rice?
2. Please outline the sanctions you have at your disposal should you be so minded as to exercise them against members of your department including Ms. Collins Rice?

All members of staff at AGO ultimately report into Ms Rowena Collins Rice as Director General. Ms Collins Rice is my manager's line manager.

There is a formal disciplinary procedure which can be invoked if appropriate. This procedure would be managed by the Human Resources team who would assign an investigator.

Your complaint has been investigated fully and I am entirely satisfied that your correspondence was handled appropriately. In this case we are unable to correspond with you further on this matter.

Yours Sincerely



Nicola Saunders
Head of Business Support

complaints@attorneygeneral.gsi.gov.uk |

Tue 03/03/2015 10:50hrs

For the Attention of Ms Saunders,

Thank you for your letter of investigation of the 3rd inst.

In a short time, for the record, I will let you have my detailed and considered response in which I will simply add to the disciplinary charges I intend ultimately lay against your Ms Collins Rice.

In the interim, in truthfully answering my questions, you have terminally compromised your own investigation.

It seems embarrassing that in the Attorney General's Office, of all places, I ought to have to remind both him, you, and his staff, in this particularly sensitive matter that, in natural justice, no one can yet be the Judge and jury their own court?

Sincerely,