
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

House of Representatives

Report concerning the registration and declaration of members' interests during
2016


February 2017

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Membership of the committee – 45th Parliament

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|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chair | Mr Russell Broadbent MP |
| Deputy Chair | Mr Pat Conroy MP |
| Members | Hon Kevin Andrews MP Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP Mr Andrew Giles MP Mr Ian Goodenough MP Mr Steve Irons MP (nominee of the Leader to the House) Ms Michelle Landry MP Mr Tony Pasin MP Hon Warren Snowdon MP (nominee of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition) Hon Wayne Swan MP |

Committee secretariat

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|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Secretary and Registrar of Members' Interests | Ms Claressa Surtees |
| Research Officer | Mr Stuart Woodley (in 2016) |
| Assistants | Ms Gillian Drew Ms Laura Gillies |

Introduction

1. Under the provisions of standing order 216 by which the committee is established, the committee is required, as soon as practicable after each 31 December, to prepare and table in the House a report on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of Members' interests during that year.
2. This is the report of the committee for the calendar year 2016, a year during which the 44th Parliament ended on 9 May 2016 and the 45th Parliament commenced on 30 August 2016.

Responsibilities of the committee

3. Standing order 216 sets out the following terms of reference for the committee:
 - (a) Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests shall be appointed to:
 - (i) inquire into and report on complaints of breach of privilege or contempt which may be referred to it by the House under *standing order 51* or by the Speaker under *standing order 52*, or any other related matter referred to it by or in accordance with a resolution of the House;
 - (ii) inquire into and report on the arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of a Register of Members' Interests;
 - (iii) consider proposals by Members and others on the form and content of the Register of Members' Interests;
 - (iv) consider specific complaints about registering or declaring interests;
 - (v) consider possible changes to any code of conduct adopted by the House; and
 - (vi) consider whether specified persons (other than Members) ought to be required to register and declare their interests.
 - (b) The committee shall consist of 11 members: the Leader of the House or his or her nominee, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or his or her nominee and nine other members, five government and four non-government Members. When the Opposition is composed of two parties, the non-government Members shall consist of at least one member of the smaller opposition party.
 - (c) The committee may call for witnesses and documents, but when considering a matter concerning the registration or declaration of Members' interests it must not exercise that power or undertake an investigation of a person's private interests unless the action is approved by at least 6 members of the committee other than the Chair.

- (d) The committee may report when it sees fit, and must report to the House on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of Members' interests during the year as soon as possible after 31 December each year.

A report in accordance with these terms of reference follows.

Arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register

4. Since 1986 arrangements approved by the committee provide that the Register may be inspected, by appointment, between 10 am and 12 noon and 2 pm and 4 pm on working days in the office of the Registrar. In addition the Registrar may grant permission for the Register to be inspected outside of those hours if the Registrar is satisfied that the circumstances surrounding the request warrant the exercise of such a discretion.
5. The publication of the statements of Members' Interests on the Parliament's website was implemented at the commencement of the 43rd Parliament. This has been a very significant change to accessibility of the statements.
6. In total the Register was inspected on only 6 occasions during 2016. These inspections take no account of the use of copies of statements of interests and notifications of alterations of interests tabled by the Chair and made available through the Table Office nor of the number of visits to the committee's electronic version of the Register. The number of inspections continues to fall as a result of making the Register available on line. A total of only 58 people have accessed the hard copy Register since it went on line on 25 October 2010.
7. The report on operations of the committee for 2015 was tabled on 11 February 2016. Statements of interests of members were tabled as follows:
 - alterations from 2 December 2015 to 15 March 2016 were tabled on 17 March 2016;
 - alterations from 16 March to 9 May 2016 were tabled on 13 October 2016;
 - members' statements of registrable interests for the 45th Parliament were tabled on 13 October 2016; and
 - alterations from 27 September to 29 November 2016 were tabled on 1 December 2016.
8. No changes were made in respect of the form and content of the Register.
9. Having considered the difficulties associated with the lodgement of statements at the commencement of the 45th Parliament, the committee decided that at the commencement of future parliaments, the Registrar may accept PDF files, in addition to original files, in satisfaction of the requirements of the House.

Specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests

10. There were no complaints raised with the committee during 2016 about the returns of members.

Changes to any code of conduct

11. The House has not adopted a code of conduct for members.

Registration of interests by other classes of person

12. No issues were considered in this area during the year.

Russell Broadbent MP
CHAIR

February 2017