



Committee's review of AEC analysis of FWA report

Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee has presented its report today for its inquiry into the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) analysis of the Fair Work Australia (FWA) report on the Health Services Union (HSU) National Office.

The committee made **13 recommendations** to improve Australia's disclosure arrangements. The report is available on the committee's website at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/em>.

A factsheet of the committee's responses to the AEC's 17 possible measures for improving the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act) is attached.

The report incorporates dissenting reports by Coalition members, which oppose 12 of the committee's recommendations and question the veracity of the AEC analysis.

As it has done in previous reports, the committee made recommendations to:

- reduce the disclosure threshold from more than \$12 100 for the 2012-2013 financial year (i.e. \$10 000 with CPI indexation) to \$1 000 and remove CPI indexation;
- introduce administrative penalties for more straightforward breaches of the Electoral Act, such as failure to lodge a return by the due date;
- clarify the definition of an 'associated entity' to address some of the current confusion surrounding the application of the term;
- strengthen the penalties for more serious offences under the Electoral Act, including fraud related offences; and
- increase the frequency of disclosure reporting from annually to six-monthly.

In addition, the committee has made recommendations to:

- require returns to be lodged electronically to improve the timeliness and efficiency of lodging and processing returns;
- require that records relevant to disclosure be kept for seven years rather than the current three years;
- insert a new offence in the Electoral Act for failing to create the records needed to enable complete and accurate disclosure;
- extend the disclosure period for new candidates to 12 months prior to their pre-selection or nomination, whichever is earlier;
- clarify, and where needed strengthen, the AEC's coercive powers;
- expand the categories of 'electoral expenditure' to cover additional relevant items including campaign staff, premises, office equipment, vehicles and travel;
- deem registered political parties to be bodies corporate for the purposes of Part XX of the Electoral Act; and
- provide greater clarity of who in an organisation has responsibility for ensuring that the required returns are lodged with the AEC.

For media comment: Please contact the Committee Chair, Daryl Melham MP on 02 6277 2054 (Parliament House office) or 02 9774 2111 (Electoral office).

For general information: Contact the secretariat on 02 6277 2374 or jscem@aph.gov.au.