



ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING WITH THE AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 24 Sept. 2001

ATT: National Media

PUBLIC HEARING ON TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2001

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS POLITICAL DONATIONS WITH AEC

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) will appear before the Electoral Matter Committee tomorrow (25 September 2001). This will be the AEC's first appearance since it revealed it has serious concerns about the operation of the electoral funding and disclosure scheme.

In its latest submission to the Committee's inquiry into funding and disclosure, the AEC argues that, amongst other things, donors and political parties may be disregarding the intent of the scheme by either minimising or avoiding disclosure.

The Committee Chair, Mr Christopher Pyne MP, Member for Sturt commented that 'the AEC has made it clear that it believes the funding and disclosure scheme is not working properly.'

The possible loopholes identified by the AEC include: using trusts and foundations to hide donors; channelling donations through fundraising organisations; donations sourced from overseas; and donating to MPs between elections.

'Such loopholes diminish the intent of the funding and disclosure scheme, which is to provide the public with a transparent view of who is funding Australia's political parties,' Mr Pyne said.

'The AEC is recommending extensive changes to the funding and disclosure scheme, including an overall ban on all disclosure avoidance mechanisms, and ensuring that political parties are held responsible for inaccuracies in their disclosures,' Mr Pyne continued.

'The Committee will work through these issues with the AEC in the interests of ensuring a transparent disclosure scheme in the future,' Mr Pyne concluded.

Ends // 24 September 2001

To arrange comment:

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PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

PUBLIC HEARING

Date: Tuesday 25 September 2001
Time: 12.30 pm – 2.00 pm
Place: House of Representatives Committee Room 2R1
Parliament House, Canberra

Witness: 12.30 pm – 2.00 pm Australian Electoral Commission

The hearing will be televised on the House Monitoring System and broadcast on the Parliamentary Internet site at: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/webcast/>

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Christopher Pyne MP (Chair)
Mr Daryl Melham MP (Deputy Chair)
Senator Andrew Bartlett
Senator the Hon. John Faulkner
Senator Jeannie Ferris
Senator Brett Mason
Senator Andrew Murray
Mr Michael Danby MP
The Hon. David Jull MP
Mr Stuart St Clair MP

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL FUNDING AND DISCLOSURE

In August 2000 the Special Minister of State, Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison, requested the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into those recommendations of the Australian Electoral Commission's 1996 and 1998 Funding and Disclosure Reports not currently incorporated in legislation or not previously examined by the Committee. The Committee will report on the desirability of incorporating the remaining AEC funding and disclosure recommendations into the existing legislation.
