



MEDIA RELEASE

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Parliament of Australia
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

24 January 2001

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY HEARING TO TOWNSVILLE AND SYDNEY

The Electoral Matters Committee will resume hearings at the end of this month in Townsville and Sydney.

At its public hearing in Townsville on 29 January the Committee will hear from former MHR Brian Courtice, former ALP Returning Officer Ray Muller (subject to Mr Muller's good health), former ALP pre-selection candidate Terry Gillman, Mayor of Townsville Tony Mooney, federal MP Peter Lindsay and Liberal Party campaign team member Bruce Bellette.

The Committee will then move to Sydney on 30 January to take evidence from Lee Bermingham, Nicholas Berman and Steve Simat, and Dr Amy McGrath.

Committee Chair, Mr Christopher Pyne MP (Member for Sturt) emphasised that the inquiry is not about the internal party matters of political parties but is targeted at the identification of fraudulent enrolment practices. 'The Committee's primary term of reference for this inquiry is to place evidence of fraudulent enrolment on the public record and develop a basis from which to recommend appropriate legislative changes that will protect the integrity of the roll. As the country will see a number of elections in the federal and state sphere this year, the urgency of identifying measures to curb electoral enrolment fraud and restoring public confidence in the electoral system is great,' he said.

'The Townsville witnesses should be able to shed light on enrolment fraud and the factors leading to it', said Mr Pyne. 'Mr Courtice, former MHR for Hinkler, has made public allegations about irregularities in AWU elections and has called for reform of industrial relations legislation to curb union influence. Mr Muller's reports of enrolment fraud drew criticism from ALP figures Mike Kaiser and Joan Budd. Mr Gillman is the candidate defeated by Karen Ehrmann in the 1996 Thuringowa pre-selection. The ALP pre-selection for the state seat of Townsville, which Tony Mooney contested, has been the subject of allegations of enrolment fraud'.

The first Sydney witness will be Lee Bermingham, former ALP State Organiser whose claims of activities relating to enrolment fraud have attracted widespread attention. Dr Amy McGrath, who will also appear in Sydney, is a strong advocate for greater transparency in the electoral system and a critic of the Australian Electoral Commission. Nicholas Berman and Steve Simat are have been the subject of allegations of false enrolment.

'The hearing provides the Committee with an opportunity to obtain concrete evidence of fraudulent activity and to explore avenues of reform with witnesses whom we consider are critical to our inquiry', said Mr Pyne.

Ends
24 January 2001

Further Information: Christopher Pyne MP (Chair) 02 6277 4842 (Parl. House) 08 8363 0666 (Electorate)
Christine Moore (Inquiry Secretary) 02 6277 2374

Hearing programs attached

INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL

TOWNSVILLE PUBLIC HEARING

Date: Monday 29 January 2001
Time: 8.45am – 3.30pm
Place: Centra Hotel Townsville, 334 Flinders Mall, Townsville
(Magnetic Room, 1st Floor)
Witnesses: 8.45am – 10.15am Mr Brian Courtice
10.30am – 11.15am Mr Ray Muller
11.15am – 12.30pm Mr Terry Gillman
1.00pm – 2.15pm Cr Tony Mooney
2.15pm – 3.30pm Mr Peter Lindsay MP and Mr Bruce Bellette

SYDNEY PUBLIC HEARING

Date: Tuesday 30 January 2001
Time: 9.00am - 3.00pm
Place: NSW State Parliament, Macquarie Street, Sydney
(Room 814/815)
Witnesses: 9.00am – 12.00pm Mr Lee Bermingham
12.00pm – 1.15pm Mr Nicholas Berman and Mr Steve Simat
1.45 pm – 3.00 pm Dr Amy McGrath

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Christopher Pyne MP (Chair)
Mr Laurie Ferguson MP (Deputy Chair)
Senator Andrew Bartlett
Senator the Hon. John Faulkner
Senator Jeannie Ferris
Senator Brett Mason
Senator Andrew Murray
Mr Robert McClelland MP
Mr Stuart St Clair MP
Hon. Alex Somlyay MP

INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL

On 23 August 2000 the Special Minister of State, Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison, asked the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to examine the issue of the integrity of the electoral roll and fraudulent enrolment. At its meeting on 5 September the Committee agreed that in examining the matter it would look at the following.

That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on:

- the adequacy of the Commonwealth Electoral Act for the prevention and detection of fraudulent enrolment;
 - incidents of fraudulent enrolment; and
 - the need for legislative reform.
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Further information:

Christopher Pyne MP (Chair) 02 6277 4842 (Parliament House) 08 8363 0666 (Electorate)
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