
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Committee of Members' Interests

**House of Representatives
Report on the operations of the Committee for 2002**

2003
Canberra

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ISBN



Membership of the committee

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Deputy Chair Mr H Jenkins MP

Members Hon J Crosio MBE MP

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Introduction

1. Under the provisions of standing order 329 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 during that year.
2. This is the report of the Committee for the calendar year 2002.

Responsibilities of the Committee

3. Standing order 329 sets out the following terms of reference for the committee:
 - (i) to inquire into and report upon the arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of a Register of Members' Interests;
 - (ii) to consider any proposals made by Members and others as to the form and content of the register;
 - (iii) to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests;
 - (iv) to consider what changes to any code of conduct adopted by the House are necessary or desirable;
 - (v) to consider what classes of persons (if any) other than Members ought to be required to register and declare their interests; and
 - (vi) to make recommendations upon these and any other matters which are relevant.

A report in accordance with these terms of reference follows.

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

4. No change was made to the arrangements by which the register is maintained. Since 1986 arrangements approved by the Committee provided that the register could 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. In total the register was inspected on twenty-one occasions during the year. Three of these inspections were made outside of the standard hours. 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.

6. The Register of Members' Interests for the 40th Parliament was tabled on 21 March 2002. Notifications of alteration of interests and a Statement of Registrable Interests received during period 11 April 2002 to 26 June 2002 were tabled on 27 June 2002 and notification of alterations of interests and a Statement of Registrable Interests received during period 27 June to 11 December 2002 were tabled on 13 December 2002.
7. When the completed register for the 40th Parliament was presented to the House on 21 March 2002 the Chair also presented copies of notifications of alterations received between the last tabling for the 39th Parliament and the date of dissolution. This was the first time such alterations had been tabled. While such declarations have always been available for inspection, their tabling makes them more widely available.

Proposals made by Members and others as to the form and content of the Register

8. No proposals were received for the alteration of the form or content of the register.

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

9. No specific complaints were raised with the Committee.

Changes to any code of conduct

10. The House has not adopted any code of conduct for Members, notwithstanding the tabling of such a draft code by the Speaker, on behalf of a working group, on 21 June 1995. The Committee was, therefore not required to consider this matter.

Registration of interests by other classes of person

11. The Committee did not agree to any proposal on this matter during 2002.

Other matters

12. From the start of the 40th Parliament the Committee agreed that Members should be given access to the registration form in both electronic and hard copy form, Members then being able to complete their declarations using the electronic document, (although they needed to print-out and sign a hard copy for lodgement). Many Members took advantage of this option.
13. The Committee notes that the values set by the House for gifts requiring declaration have not been increased since 1994, and that the limit for other assets has not been increased since the requirements were set in place in 1984. In its report 2/2002 the Committee of Senators' Interests has recommended increases in relevant values. We endorse those proposals and recommend the following alterations:

- paragraph (i) of the requirements(other assets) — increase the limit from \$5,000 to \$10,000
- paragraph (k) of the requirements (gifts) — increase the limits from \$500 to \$1000 (gifts from official sources) and from \$200 to \$500 (gifts from other sources).

We also note that the House has not set values in respect of category (l) — sponsored travel or hospitality. We consider that a value should be set for this category and recommend that \$500 would be appropriate. This would make the requirements for Members consistent with those recommended for Senators.

(B HAASE MP)

Chair

5 March 2003