
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Committee of Members' Interests

**House of Representatives
Report on the operations of the Committee for 2005**

15 February 2006
Canberra

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ISBN 0 642 78762 X

Membership of the committee

41st Parliament

Chair Mr S Ciobo MP

Deputy Chair Mr H Jenkins MP

Members Mr R Baldwin MP (discharged 9/2/06)
Mr A Byrne MP

Mr P Neville MP
Mr H Quick MP
Mr P Secker MP (appointed 9/2/06)
Mr C Thompson MP

Committee secretariat

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Introduction

1. Under the provisions of standing order 220 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 2005.

Responsibilities of the Committee

3. Standing order 220 sets out the following terms of reference for the committee:
 - (i) to inquire into and report on the arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of a Register of Members' Interests;
 - (ii) to consider proposals made by Members and others on the form and content of the register;
 - (iii) to consider any specific complaints about registering or declaring interests;
 - (iv) to consider possible changes to any code of conduct adopted by the House;
 - (v) to consider whether persons (other than Members) ought to be required to register and declare their interests;

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 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. In total the register was inspected on twenty occasions during the year. Two 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 Report on operations of the Committee of Members' Interests for 2004 was tabled on 17 February 2005. Notifications of alteration of interests received during the period 10 February 2005 to 22 June 2005 were tabled on 23 June 2005, and those for 23 June 2005 to 7 December 2005 were tabled on 8 December 2005.

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

7. The Committee discussed the fact that while Senators are required to declare the interests of spouses and dependent children, those declarations are kept in a separate part of the register and no details are disclosed unless the Committee of Senators' Interests agrees to a specific request. The committee has decided to give further consideration to this matter.

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

8. No specific complaints were raised with the Committee.

Changes to any code of conduct

9. The House has not adopted any code of conduct for Members, although a draft code was tabled 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

10. The Committee discussed the fact that the requirements were confined to Members of the House (who have to declare their own interests and those of a spouse or dependent children), but it did not agree to any proposal on the matter.

Other matters

11. 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.

12. During the year New Zealand's House of Representatives put in place arrangements for the registration of Members' interests. A retired judge, Mr Anand Satyanand was appointed Registrar of Members Interests and, together with Ms Carol Rankin of the Clerk's Office, visited Australia to discuss the administration of the requirements here. The Committee's Chairman and staff met with Judge Satyanand and Ms Rankin and enjoyed discussing the requirements and their administration with them.

(STEVEN CIOBO MP)

Chair

15 February 2006