

Coalition Senators' Dissenting Report

1.1 As outlined in our dissenting report to the Committee majority's interim report, minority senators believe this inquiry is nothing but a political stunt by the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens.

1.2 The Terms of Reference were constructed to give the impression the inquiry would be about Commonwealth legislation in relation to political donations. The short timeframe for the inquiry, its conduct, and the lines of questioning belie this. The motive behind this inquiry was simply to pursue matters which come within the purview of New South Wales legislation, as well as to pursue a Senate Minister.

1.3 Given the matters traversed in the inquiry are still currently being dealt with by the New South Wales Electoral Commission, it is an appalling waste of the committee's time and resources to pursue these matters in this hastily convened and overtly biased Senate Committee inquiry.

1.4 Mr Tom Rogers, the Electoral Commissioner and only witness at the Committee's hearing, is quite right to take a cautious and prudent approach to these matters, correctly asserting that 'much of that evidence before the Independent Commission Against Corruption is contested evidence'¹. For certain senators of this Committee to relentlessly pursue Mr Rogers over his response to these matters is disgraceful, especially when the Electoral Commissioner has repeatedly previously laid out a clear, cogent, and reasonable course of action which he again reiterated at the inquiry's hearing: stating multiple times he would consider any potential issues arising from ICAC investigations after a final report is handed down. Minority senators again raise serious concerns about the behaviour of some senators taking part in this inquiry, particularly Senator the Hon Penny Wong, at the hearing towards Mr Rogers. At best, the treatment of Mr Rogers can be described as unedifying.

1.5 As Mr Rogers said in the Committee's two-hour hearing, there are currently 192 associated entities under the relevant Commonwealth legislation. We note that the majority of these associated entities are affiliated with the ALP. We further note that all ALP-aligned associated entities had a combined declared income of more than \$800 million for financial year 2014-15.

1.6 Despite requests from Coalition senators, the Committee majority refused to invite one person from any of these associated entities.

1.7 The Committee majority report shows this inquiry has served no useful purpose. It has discovered nothing new and made no recommendations. It focusses on matters under New South Wales legislation in a thinly veiled attempt to drag them into the Commonwealth arena with an election looming. Such stunts achieve nothing useful; instead they risk bringing the Senate committee system into disrepute and compromising its integrity.

¹ *Committee Hansard*, 28 April 2016, p.9.

Senator Cory Bernardi
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