

SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Robert scrutinised over use of his office

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Former Turnbull frontbencher Stuart Robert said he had never conducted fundraising activities at his taxpayer-funded electorate office, after telling a Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission about fortnightly visits from his bookkeeper involving his Fadden Forum.

Under questioning during the CCC's public hearings into the conduct of council candidates in last year's local government elections, the LNP MP for Fadden testified last week that the fundraising branch had received donations exceeding \$1000 a month from "members".

Senate F&PA Committee

Tabled Document

Inquiry: Budget Estimates 2017-18

Date/Time: 25/5/17

Witness Name: Senator Kitching

Organisation:

Mr Robert gave evidence that a bookkeeper arrived at his electorate office once a fortnight and would handle "any invoicing or receipting the bookkeeper would do" for the Forum, along with campaign expenses.

"The bookkeeper would generally come in to my office and do a whole range of bits and bobs, one of which is to actually process any reimbursements from the party," he said.

He also told the CCC hearing that two former staff members who received \$30,000 each in donations from the Forum when running for the Gold Coast council would have been aware of the fundraising arm "by osmosis".

"You'd hardly get by a week without the name (Fadden Forum) being aired," he said.

But yesterday, Mr Robert said the bookkeeper only collected documents about the Forum that he printed from his home, to be taken away for processing.

"We don't fundraise from the office," Mr Robert said.

"The bookkeeper has come in to pick things up from me. So they walk in the door, pick things up and bugger off."

He said there were no physical copies of Forum memberships or other related documents stored in his office, and that the bookkeeper would collect "anything that I would print out from home".

Special Minister of State Scott Ryan, who oversees compliance with parliamentary rules, regulations and legislation, did not respond to a list of questions yesterday.

Instead, his staff directed queries to the handbook provided to all MPs and senators.

Labor's spokesman on special state matters, Don Farrell, said the government needed to explain whether it would look into the matter.

"The rules are clear: members and senators must not use their electorate offices for commercial purposes," Senator Farrell said.

"If Mr Robert has allowed the Fadden Forum to fundraise from his office then he has some serious explaining to do.

"Minister Ryan also needs to explain what he's doing to investigate this matter and what the consequences will be."

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