

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2015-16

Finance Portfolio
9 February 2016

Department/Agency: Australian Electoral Commission

Outcome/Program: General

Topic: Meaning of the word 'subscriptions' in terms of political donations

Senator: Rhiannon

Question reference number: F10

Type of question: Hansard Proof, F&PA Committee, Pages 35-36, 9 February 2016

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 1 April 2016

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator RHIANNON: I understand that. I have 11 donations here and over half a million dollars in subscriptions, and the word 'subscriptions' was, for example, used with: '\$66,000 from ClubsNSW' or '\$110,000 from Woodside Energy'. I think we have a broad idea what the word 'subscriptions' means. Do you question what it means in terms of a political donation disclosure?

Mr Rogers: I think there are two questions there. If you are asking, 'Did we?' I shall take that on notice because I am unsure about whether we have done that or not ...

Senator RHIANNON: Did you ask the companies if they viewed it as a subscription?

Mr Rogers: I will take that on notice, but I will almost guarantee that we did not check with the companies...

...

Senator RHIANNON: I appreciate that you have to take it on notice, but from the answer that you have given it appears that you think they have used the term 'subscriptions' because it is not a gift. Does that mean when another party fills out its—

Mr Rogers: ... I would prefer to take that on notice.

...

Senator RHIANNON: So that and the terminology—both of the questions that we put on notice, about the issue of terminology and also how you handle these disclosures when they arrive. We have political parties now describing it in ways that we were not aware could be done.

Answer:

Under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* political parties and associated entities are required to disclose all transactions over the threshold for a given year. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) requests that parties and entities separate 'donations' from 'other receipts' when preparing returns. Any further categorisation of other receipts is at the discretion of the body (entity) with the reporting obligation.

Political parties and associated entities may provide additional clarifying information to provide a clear picture of the underlying transactions. For example political parties may wish to separately identify receipts such as membership fees, subscriptions, rent, interest received or loan funds. Advice in relation to disclosure is provided in the Financial Disclosure Guides published on the AEC website.