

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017-18

Finance Portfolio
24-25 May 2017

Department/Agency: AEC
Outcome/Program: General
Topic: Stuart Robert

Senator: Farrell
Question reference number: F149
Type of question: Written
Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 7 July 2017

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Regarding the ongoing Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) inquiry into the 2016 Queensland local government elections:

1. Have the AEC been monitoring the proceedings?
2. Have the AEC been liaising with the CCC about any matters that have been raised at the inquiry?
3. Have the AEC been asked to provide any material to the CCC to assist with their inquiries?

On 18 April 2017 the inquiry heard Stuart Robert MP's Fadden Forum donated \$30,000 each to two of Mr Robert's staff members, including Kristyn Boulton, who won her division at last year's election, and is now a Gold Coast councillor.

Mr Robert told the corruption commission hearing there should have been more transparency in using LNP funds for candidates who portrayed themselves as independent candidates.

He said in evidence: "It certainly would have helped if it was more widely known." (Source: LNP controlled Fadden Forum fund-raising body, says Stuart Robert AFR 18 April 2017)

In her evidence Ms Boulton, conceded the LNP funding could make it appear to the public that her independence had been compromised.

Her evidence read: "I can see that now. I certainly will be paying more attention in future. Perhaps I've been a little naive."

(Source: BRISTIMES: Turnbull government MP Stuart Robert defends \$30k donations at corruption hearing: 'A Labor foothold was not appealing' 18 April 2017)

4. Does the AEC have a view on candidates who profess to run as independents but are actually funded by a political party?
5. Has the AEC dealt with this issue before?
6. Has the AEC provided any advice to Government on how to address this issue?

Answer:

1. Yes.
2. No.
3. No.
4. The Australian Electoral Commission administers Part XX of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) which deals with the financial disclosure of all participants in the electoral process which includes candidates, senate groups, donors and third parties. In particular, under Section 304 of the Electoral Act, all candidates, independent or endorsed by a Party, in a federal election or by-election, are required to disclose gifts over the threshold for that given year. Candidates are also required to disclose political expenditure in the categories outlined under s 309(2) of the Electoral Act.

The Electoral Act does not place restrictions on who a candidate can source donations from as long as the donation adheres to the requirements regarding attribution as per s 306.

5. No.
6. No.