

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2006

Question: F5

Outcome 2, Output 2.1.3

Topic: Special Matter – Russell Galt secret account

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Senator Ray asked:

Senator Robert Ray—If it is still with the AFP, I will not pursue it any further. Again, I am basing this next question on a newspaper report; the second qualification is that it is from the Australian. I am not sure how much credibility you want to give it. The Australian of 31 August, on page 2, says that a very prominent Queensland businessman and former member of the Liberal Party, Mr Russell Galt, ‘claims the federal Liberal Party set up a secret account that paid \$140,000 to end his court case against Dr Flegg’. Has there been any investigation about this account? Do we know whether it exists or whether it is just a rhetorical claim made by a disaffected party member?

Mr Bodel—We are not aware of the specifics of the case you are referring to, but I will look at it.

Answer:

The Australian of 31 August 2006 contains an article that claims the Liberal Party of Australia set up a secret account to pay the legal fees of Mr Russell Galt who was involved in a court appeal over a preselection for the Queensland State seat of Moggill before the 2004 Queensland election.

The Australian Electoral Commission is examining whether there are any disclosure obligations in relation to this article, and if so, whether those disclosure obligations have been met.

The examination will be treated as a special matter henceforth and will be reported on at each Senate Estimates hearing until finalised.