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*(This letter refers to a proposed meeting; our records do not show whether this meeting took place.)*
- 18 August 2003 Letter from SMOS (Senator Abetz) to President Calvert
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*[Meeting takes place between Senate Department officers and officers of DOFA on 3 September 2003.]*
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SENATOR THE HON ERIC ABETZ  
Special Minister of State  
Liberal Senator for Tasmania

11 JAN 2002

Senator the Hon Margaret Reid  
President of the Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Madam President, *Nazgul,*

On 9 September 2001 I wrote to you inviting your consideration of a relocation to the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Group in the Department of Finance and Administration of the newsletter and personalised printing entitlement of Senators. My letter followed a recommendation made by the Auditor-General concerning the administration of the entitlement for Members and I wrote to the Speaker at the same time as I wrote to you.

As you know the Prime Minister announced on 27 September 2001 that the Government had decided that a financial limit would be placed on the expenditure on newsletters and personalised stationery by each Member. The Prime Minister also announced at the same time that the printing entitlement of Senators would remain the same.

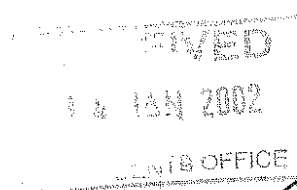
Regulations to give effect to the Prime Minister's announcement were made by the Governor-General in Council on 20 December 2001.

The Speaker has now replied to my earlier letter advising that his consideration of the issue was delayed by the election and suggesting we meet early in February.

My particular purpose in writing to you now is to again invite your comments, including whether you would see value in meeting with the Speaker and me next month.

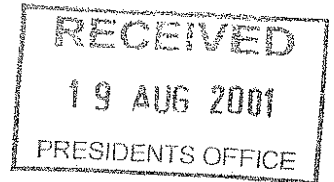
Yours sincerely

ERIC ABETZ





SENATOR THE HON ERIC ABETZ  
Special Minister of State  
Liberal Senator for Tasmania



Senator the Hon Paul Calvert  
President of the Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

18 AUG 2003

Dear President *Paul,*

I am writing to explore with you the appropriateness of the arrangements, that are currently in force, requiring Senators to obtain the approval of Department of the Senate officials in respect of the content of the newsletters they have printed.

The vetting arrangements applied to Senators has been the cause of complaint over a considerable period of time. I understand that in the past the cost of Senators' printing was met from the annual appropriation for the running operation of the Parliament. This arrangement was seen as placing particular responsibilities and powers with officials of the Department of the Senate.

I understand that the funding arrangements were significantly changed when, with effect from 1 January 2002, the printing entitlements of Senators were prescribed in the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations 1997. The *Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990* contains a standing appropriation (section 11) in respect of benefits provided under the Act and Regulations. However, since 1 January 2002, I understand, the printing entitlements of Senators have been provided under the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act*, rather than from the annual operational budget of the Parliament.

As you may well be aware, responsibility for administering the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act* has been placed with me. You will therefore appreciate that I have a particular concern about the administration of all the benefits provided under the Act and the associated Regulations.

In light of the above you may see value in officers of our two departments meeting to develop, for our joint consideration, a draft understanding on the administration of Senators' printing entitlements.

Yours sincerely

ERIC ABETZ



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA

19 AUG 2003

Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz  
Special Minister of State  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

*Eric,*

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2003 about the arrangements currently in force relating to approval of the content of newsletters printed by Senators using their entitlement.

I note that the funding arrangements did change at the beginning of last year when the printing entitlement of Senators (and Members) were prescribed in the *Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations 1997* and, as a consequence of this being prescribed by law, the funding for the entitlement is now under an administered special appropriation, managed by the Department of the Senate.

I note that you are responsible for the administration of the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990* and I would be happy for officers of the Senate and the Department of Finance and Administration to meet to discuss the existing arrangements and to prepare, for our joint consideration, a draft understanding on the administration of the prescribed printing entitlement for Senators.

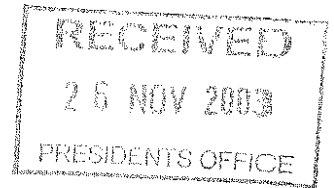
The senior officer in charge of printing in the Senate is the Usher of the Black Rod, Ms Andrea Griffiths, and I will send her a copy of this letter for her information. Black Rod or her nominee will represent the Senate in any discussions with your officers, and I suggest your Department make contact with her direct.

Yours sincerely

(Paul Calvert)



SENATOR THE HON ERIC ABETZ  
Special Minister of State  
Liberal Senator for Tasmania



Senator the Hon Paul Calvert  
President of the Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

25 NOV 2003

Dear President *Paul,*

I refer to your letters of 18 and 19 August 2003 concerning the administration of the printing entitlement provided to Senators under the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations 1997. My particular concern was the complaints by Senators about the arrangements and the responsibilities placed with me for administering the *Parliamentary Entitlements Act 1990* and associated Regulations.

I note that on 28 October 2003 you issued revised, more flexible guidelines which recognised the implications of the change in the source of funding.

My reason for writing to you at this stage is to express my appreciation for the cooperation shown by you and your Department. With the successful resolution of the matter I doubt that much would be served by proceeding to a formal memorandum of understanding.

Yours sincerely

ERIC ABETZ

*Noted  
AD 11/12/03*



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA

The Hon. Gary Nairn, MP  
Special Minister of State  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

29 MAY 2006

Dear Minister

I write to you about the administration of the printing entitlement provided to Senators under the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations 1997.

I had a long exchange of correspondence on this matter with your predecessor as Special Minister of State, both before and after the matter was raised by Opposition Senators in estimates hearings (for example on 24 May 2004), concerned at the anomaly of the Department of the Senate continuing to administer the printing entitlement of Senators through a regulation administered by a Minister of the Government and a special appropriation.

In an attempt to address some of the matters relating to the administration of the printing entitlement, a meeting was held on 3 September 2003 between officers of the Department of the Senate, led by Ms Andrea Griffiths, Usher of the Black Rod, and officers of the Department of Finance and Administration, led by Mr John Gavin, then Special Adviser in the Ministerial Entitlements area. As a result of this meeting, on 28 October 2003 I issued modified guidelines for Senators on the use of their entitlements. However, our understanding was that DOFA would undertake further work and come back, through the Special Minister of State, with options for the future.

The present arrangements require officers of the Department of the Senate to exercise a 'vetting' role in respect of content of printed newsletters, consistent with the guidelines contained in the DOFA publication *Senators and Members Entitlements Handbook*. This vetting role has been a source of complaints for a considerable period of time from Senators of all political persuasions, and the Clerk of the Senate has advised that he would have no objection if the function is transferred to DOFA.

As you know, Members of the House of Representatives have a significantly greater yearly printing allowance, and are allowed to use local printers for newsletters, calendars, letterhead, etc. I am not for a moment proposing that Senators should have a matching printing allowance, because I do not think that could be justified.

However, one realistic option could be that Senators were each allocated a capped amount by DOFA as a 'newsletter and official stationery allowance', which they could expend in the same manner as Members of the House, certifying to DOFA that the usage was in accordance with the Regulations. This would allow Senators to either use local printing firms (something many have raised with me and my predecessors) for these newsletters, or the Senate Printing Unit, and the cost of the printing having been certified by the Senator would be forwarded to DOFA for payment.

Such a modest change would obviate the need for Senate Department officers to be placed in the invidious position of 'vetting' newsletter content, and in any case where an allegation of mis-use is made, the onus would be on the Senator to prove to DOFA that he or she had acted within the guidelines, as has long been the case with Members.

Another benefit of such a change would be that the cost of freighting large printing jobs from the Unit to Senators' electorate offices across Australia would be significantly reduced. As a trial, the Senate Department has recently devolved to a WA printer all printing for WA Senators to assess the cost savings and efficiency. Depending on assessments, future plans may include local devolution of printing for SA, Northern Territory and Tasmanian Senators. In addition, all envelopes, business cards and folded products are already done by commercial printers in Canberra, because the Senate Printing Unit lacks the necessary equipment.

From Departmental costings advised to me, the average annual cost of newsletter and stationery printing over the last several years has been \$20,000 per Senator. Out of a total cost of \$300,000 for Senators' freight, the cost of freighting Senators' stationery from Canberra to their electorate offices is around \$60,000 per annum, which would be saved should printing be localised.

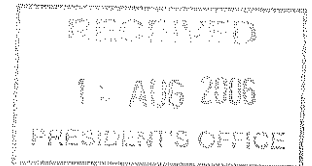
I emphasise that I am not suggesting an increase in the current quantum of funding available for Senators' printing, merely a change in the administrative arrangements.

I would appreciate your consideration of this proposal, with a view to resolving this long-standing anomaly, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Paul Calvert', written in dark ink.

(Paul Calvert)



THE HON GARY NAIRN MP  
Special Minister of State  
Federal Member for Eden-Monaro

15 AUG 2006

Senator the Hon Paul Calvert  
President of the Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator *Paul*

Thank you for your letter of 29 May 2006, proposing the Parliamentary Entitlements Regulations 1997 be amended, so that each Senator's printing entitlement is set at \$20,000 per annum and the administrative arrangements be made identical to those for Members of the House of Representatives. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I note that this matter has also been raised a number of times during Senate Estimates, during which Opposition Senators have indicated their support for the proposal.

I wrote to the Prime Minister along the lines suggested by you on 6 June 2006 and you will be pleased to know that he agreed to the proposals. The Federal Executive Council considered this matter on 10 August 2006, and agreed to implement them with a commencement date of 1 September 2006.

Enclosed with this letter is a draft circular which will be distributed following the tabling of the Regulations in the Parliament.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to resolving this matter in the best interests of your colleagues in the Senate.

Yours sincerely

*Gary Nairn*  
GARY NAIRN

*Noted  
A: 16/8/06*