

Wednesday, 4 June 2008

Mr S Palethorpe
The Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Palethorpe,

INQUIRY INTO LOBBYING CODE OF CONDUCT

Parker & Partners is pleased to have the opportunity to provide our submission on the Lobbying Code of Conduct to the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration.

Parker & Partners is an eminent professional public affairs company established in 1998. As a part of Ogilvy PR Worldwide in Australia, our broader organisation represents the country's largest public relations and public affairs group.

We have a team of experienced consultants with expertise in policy analysis, media management, issues and crisis management, stakeholder management, community engagement and research.

As a professional services group whose range of activities include lobbying and advocacy to Government we support policies and regulation that promote transparency and provide assurance to the Government, our clientele and the public.

Please find following our comments covering Terms of reference: Response to (c) any other relevant matters regarding the Lobbying Code of Conduct. The main focus of our submission is the clarity around reporting and breaches of the code.

Please don't hesitate to contact me on (02) 6215 4200 if I can be of any assistance or to clarify any of the comments made in this submission.

Yours sincerely



GREG A SAM
Joint Managing Director

SUBMISSION TO SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Parker & Partners welcomes the opportunity to provide our submission on the Lobbying Code of Conduct to the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration. The following comments constitute our submission to the Inquiry into the Lobbying Code of Conduct.

Terms of reference: Response to (c) any other relevant matters

General comments on the Lobbying Code of Conduct

Parker & Partners supports the intent of the Code of Conduct to assure transparency in engagement with government decision makers and influencers.

We strongly agree with the Preamble that lobbying is a legitimate activity and an important part of the democratic process.

Parker & Partners recognises the importance of public confidence in the integrity of Ministers, their staff and senior Government officials, as well as the integrity of the lobbying profession whom, on the whole, work in an ethical and transparent manner.

Reporting and handling of potential breaches of the Code

P&P feel that there is insufficient detail in the Code regarding the responsibilities of Ministers, advisers and officials and the Department with respect to the reporting and handling of potential breaches.

Further clarification / information should be provided on the process for:

- determining whether a breach has occurred,
- how a claimant makes a representation on a potential breach or if there is a requirement to produce information or evidence of a potential breach;
- investigating the reported breach by the Department;
- lobbyists to respond to the claims of a breach or to appeal the decision (including timeframes for notification and appeals);
- determining whether the breach applies to an individual consultant or to the registered business and how that determination is made;
- resolving disputes, such as using an independent arbiter, and any avenues for recourse for the affected lobbyist;
- removing the lobby firm or individual consultant from the register and how this is recorded or reported; and
- Dealing with administrative or minor breaches of the code that do not warrant removal from the register.