

22 August 2011

JSCEM's inquiry into the funding of political parties and election campaigns

I am writing to clarify my views in relation to an exchange that occurred during my appearance before the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on Wednesday, 10 August 2011. The exchange detailed in pages 15-16 of the proof transcripts is extracted below:

Mr GRIFFIN: I think the real point about it, beyond all that, is the fact that it is complex. It is not simple and it is not easy. Sometimes some commentary, certainly in the media, distorts that.

CHAIR: I think the Auditor-General, in his report, which I was intimately involved in through talking with him about it, distorts it as well, with the greatest of respect.

Dr Tham: *I agree with that, Mr Melham.* I think that is important. That is why, in my submission, I spend a bit of time putting forward the case that there is a legitimate case for parliamentary entitlements. I do not want my position to be misconstrued as basically the crude position where any public money going to parliamentarians is seen to be a rort, because it is not a rort. But the question is distinguishing between what are legitimate uses of public money and what are illegitimate uses, and having the regulation to entrench that distinction.

I wish to clarify that the italicised statement where I express agreement with Mr Melham was based on wrongly hearing or assuming what Mr Melham was saying. I thought he was echoing Mr Griffin's immediately previous point about media commentary distorting the complex issue of parliamentary entitlements. It was with that earlier point I was agreeing and my response was directed to that point.

I was not agreeing with the proposition that the Auditor-General's report distorted the issue.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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