
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests

House of Representatives

Report concerning the registration and declaration of members' interests during
2017

February 2018

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Membership of the committee – 45th Parliament

Chair	Mr Russell Broadbent MP	(to 30 May 2017)
	Mr Ross Vasta	(from 15 June 2017)
Deputy Chair	Mr Pat Conroy MP	
Members	Hon Kevin Andrews MP	
	Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP	
	Mr Andrew Giles MP	
	Mr Ian Goodenough MP	
	Mr Steve Irons MP	(nominee of Leader to the House)
	Ms Michelle Landry MP	
	Mrs Nola Marino MP	(from 10 August 2017)
	Mr Tony Pasin MP	(to 15 June 2017)
	Hon Warren Snowdon MP	(nominee of Deputy Leader of the Opposition)
	Hon Wayne Swan MP	

Committee secretariat

Secretary and Registrar of Members' Interests	Ms Claressa Surtees
Research Officer	Mr Peter Banson
Assistants	Ms Gillian Drew
	Ms Laura Gillies

Introduction

1. Under the provisions of standing order 216 by which the committee is established, the committee is required, as soon as practicable after each 31 December, to prepare and table in the House a report on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of Members' interests during that year.
2. This is the report of the committee for the calendar year 2017.

Responsibilities of the committee

3. Standing order 216 sets out the following terms of reference for the committee:
 - (a) Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests shall be appointed to:
 - (i) inquire into and report on complaints of breach of privilege or contempt which may be referred to it by the House under *standing order 51* or by the Speaker under *standing order 52*, or any other related matter referred to it by or in accordance with a resolution of the House;
 - (ii) inquire into and report on the arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of a Register of Members' Interests;
 - (iii) consider proposals by Members and others on the form and content of the Register of Members' Interests;
 - (iv) consider specific complaints about registering or declaring interests;
 - (v) consider possible changes to any code of conduct adopted by the House; and
 - (vi) consider whether specified persons (other than Members) ought to be required to register and declare their interests.
 - (b) The committee shall consist of 11 members: the Leader of the House or his or her nominee, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or his or her nominee and nine other members, five government and four non-government Members. When the Opposition is composed of two parties, the non-government Members shall consist of at least one member of the smaller opposition party.
 - (c) The committee may call for witnesses and documents, but when considering a matter concerning the registration or declaration of Members' interests it must not exercise that power or undertake an investigation of a person's private interests unless the action is approved by at least 6 members of the committee other than the Chair.

- (d) The committee may report when it sees fit, and must report to the House on its operations in connection with the registration and declaration of Members' interests during the year as soon as possible after 31 December each year.

A report in accordance with these terms of reference follows.

Arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register

4. Since 1986 arrangements approved by the committee provide that the Register may be inspected, by appointment, between 10 am and 12 noon and 2 pm and 4 pm on working days in the office of the Registrar. In addition the Registrar may grant permission for the Register to be inspected outside of those hours if the Registrar is satisfied that the circumstances surrounding the request warrant the exercise of such a discretion.
5. The publication of the statements of Members' Interests on the Parliament's website was implemented at the commencement of the 43rd Parliament. This has been a very significant change to accessibility of the statements.
6. In total the Register was inspected on only two occasions during 2017. These inspections take no account of the use of copies of statements of interests and notifications of alterations of interests tabled by the Chair and made available through the Table Office nor of the number of visits to the committee's electronic version of the Register. The number of inspections continues to fall as a result of making the Register available on line. A total of only 60 people have accessed the hard copy Register since it went on line on 25 October 2010.
7. The report on operations of the committee for 2016 was tabled on 9 February 2017. Statements of interests of members were tabled as follows:
 - a further volume of members' statements of registrable interests for the 45th Parliament was tabled on 9 February 2017;
 - alterations from 29 November 2016 to 28 March 2017 were tabled on 30 March 2017; and
 - alterations from 29 March to 20 June 2017 were tabled on 22 June 2017.
8. No changes were made in respect of the form and content of the Register.

Specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests

9. On 15 August 2017, the Member for Isaacs, the Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP, wrote to the committee, under SO 216(a)(iv) asking the committee to examine a complaint relating to a member of the 44th Parliament in the following terms:

Whether the former Member for Dunkley, Mr Bruce Billson, acted contrary to House resolutions on the Registration of Members' Interests.

10. Mr Dreyfus claimed that Mr Billson had failed to declare on his statement of registrable interests in the 44th Parliament that while he was still a member of the House he was appointed as a director of the Franchise Council of Australia and had begun to receive a salary in respect of that position.
11. The committee commenced an inquiry into the complaint and had not completed its work at the time of preparation of this report.
12. There were no further complaints raised with the committee during 2017 about the returns of members.

Changes to any code of conduct

13. The House has not adopted a code of conduct for members.

Registration of interests by other classes of person

14. No issues were considered in this area during the year.

Ross Vasta MP
CHAIR

February 2018