

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Question No. SBE15/001

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2015:

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: What engagement has that contact generated?

Mr Wilson: I have gone and spoken to a number of political parties. I do not have the exact dates in front of me, but I spoke to the South Australian Greens, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Liberal Party of Australia in some states. I understand the Country Liberal Party has asked if I can go and speak to them at some point in the future. I understand the same is true of the Western Australian National Party. There may be others.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: You mentioned earlier that you sent invitations at the outset. Whom were they sent to?

Mr Wilson: I have copies of them right here—every single major political party in the country, going through each state division of the Australian Greens, the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party of Australia, the National Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and I am sure there are others. Each one of them has been given the same opportunity and the same capacity to host a forum or some sort of meeting to discuss these issues. I have met with different state Labor MPs in some states. I have met with state Green members of parliament in other states. It just depends on how that political party has chosen to engage.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: On the forms of engagement, how many of those engagements have been fundraisers?

Mr Wilson: My understanding is none of them have been fundraisers. One of the things we do when we organise is send out a letter making it clear that parties are welcome to host a forum; that if any travel costs are incurred, they have to incur them; and that they are not to be fundraisers, although people are entitled to charge an appropriate fee for room hire costs or any catering costs.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Can you provide me with a copy of that advice, please?

Mr Wilson: Sure. I will take it on notice and provide it to you, but it is also in all the letters we have sent through to the various political parties.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

Political parties inviting the Human Rights Commissioner to speak at an event receive the following advice:

The Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson, will engage with community groups, including political parties, as part of his public education role to promote human rights.

Commissioner Wilson will speak at functions to educate members of political parties about the role of the Human Rights Commissioner, key human rights issues, and to seek feedback and views from all Australians about human rights issues that concern them. The purpose of Commissioner Wilson's engagement with political parties is solely for the purpose of community education and consultation.

So long as it is practicable, Commissioner Wilson is happy to speak to any political party. However, Commissioner Wilson will not speak at party political fundraising events.

The conditions for Commissioner Wilson's attendance at an event are:

- Any costs (flights, accommodation, taxis or public transport) are incurred by the political party and not the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- The event is not a fundraising event for the political party.
- There is no unnecessary charge for attendees, although cost recovery for room hire and light refreshments is acceptable.

Commissioner Wilson regularly travels around Australia in his official capacity. Therefore, it is possible to organise a speaking event allied to his attendance in a city for other purposes and so avoid the travel costs.

Commissioner Wilson will ordinarily only know his travel arrangements approximately a month in advance of travel. Consequently, it is not always possible to determine when he will be in a particular city, which may leave limited time to attend an event.