

25/05/09

The Executive Officer
Victorian Parliament Law Reform Committee
Parliament House
East Melbourne Vic. 3002

Dear Sir,

I write regarding the review of the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 to express my comments and concerns to the Committee.

There is a view prevailing in the community that M.P's are rorting the system and while there may be cases where this has occurred, and this must be eradicated, it is imperative that if the community are to have confidence in their Members of Parliament, any changes to this Act must reinforce the integrity of the Parliament and provide transparency when relating to ministers or ordinary members actions, accountability and or claims for expenses.

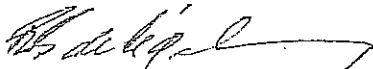
The Committee should not bow to the irresponsible and generally inaccurate media articles highlighting members and particular ministers expenses claims. Thinking people realise that in order to carry out their responsibilities most members act responsibly. However we have seen recently some stories of what appear to be outrageously excessive claims for overseas trips and it may be necessary to limit flights for ministers to business class and place some limits on accommodation costs and the number of staff accompanying them at taxpayers expense on these journeys.

Members should be required to hand over frequent flyer points earned on taxpayer funded trips to the Clerk of the Parliament. They must not be used for personal or family use.

With regard to s 9 penalties for any breach of the Act, the level of penalty needs to be brought in line with today's values and strengthened to ensure there is no cover up by government where a minister or member may be at fault. Any breach should be dealt with severely and swiftly by either standing down or dismissal when provisions of the Act have been transgressed.

We do not need over regulation and it is disappointing that it is necessary to tighten the provisions when the people we elect should be very conscious of self regulation, but in the interests of restoring community confidence it seems some changes are required.

Yours sincerely



The Hon. Richard S de Fegely
Former MLC, Ballarat Province.