

CONTACT WITH LOBBYISTS CODE - REGISTER OF LOBBYISTS

Statement by Premier

MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee - Premier) [2.18 pm]: In November 2006 I announced that the Western Australian government would be establishing a Register of Lobbyists. Today I table the Contact with Lobbyists Code, which creates the Register of Lobbyists, establishes rules for contact between lobbyists and ministers, parliamentary secretaries, ministerial staff and public sector employees and establishes standards of conduct for lobbyists who wish to be included on the Register of Lobbyists. The Contact with Lobbyists Code has application through the ministerial code of conduct and the codes of conduct that apply to public sector bodies.

The Contact with Lobbyists Code will operate in such a way that no minister, ministerial staff member or employee of a public sector body will be permitted to have professional contact with a lobbyist unless the lobbyist is included on the Register of Lobbyists. This requirement will come into effect on 16 April 2007.

Over the next four weeks lobbyists will be able to apply online to the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to be included on the Register of Lobbyists. The dedicated website address for the Register of Lobbyists is www.lobbyistsregister.dpc.wa.gov.au. I am advised that this site should be live before close of business today.

My government recognises that lobbying is a legitimate part of the democratic process. All vibrant democracies have lobbyists. In Western Australia the overwhelming majority of lobbyists are honest, decent individuals who operate according to ethical business practices. Unfortunately, the reputation of lobbying and lobbyists has been damaged through the actions of Brian Burke, Julian Grill and Noel Crichton-Browne. Evidence submitted to the recent hearings of the Corruption and Crime Commission has shown that Burke, Grill and Crichton-Browne have, at the very least, shown an absolute contempt for standards of political probity and a total disregard of the ethics expected of individuals operating in the sphere of public life. For this reason, the government will not allow Burke, Grill and Crichton-Browne to be on the Register of Lobbyists.

The Contact with Lobbyists Code is deliberately minimalist in its approach. It applies only to lobbyists who represent third parties. It does not apply to business lobby groups, trade unions, or religious or charitable bodies. Nor does it apply to recognised professional and technical occupations. The information requirements of the Register of Lobbyists are also minimalist. The register will contain a lobbyist's business registration details, details of employees who are engaged in lobbying, and names of clients who are currently being represented by the lobbyist. These details will need to be updated every three months. To remain on the register, lobbyists will need to keep their details up to date and abide by a set of principles of ethical conduct that are included in the Contact with Lobbyists Code.

Point of Order

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is a time for three-minute statements. That time has elapsed. We are prepared to not interfere with the Premier completing his statement but I note that this should have been a major ministerial statement, allowing the opposition to respond. This is an insult to the Parliament on the first sitting in this new chamber.

The SPEAKER: The first part of the point of order is correct; brief ministerial statements should be three minutes in length. It is also a practice of this place that three-minute statements should not be subject to interjections because of the limited nature of them. I notice that there have been a number of interjections. I am sure the Premier will be finished shortly.

Debate Resumed

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Contact with Lobbyists Code and the Register of Lobbyists will be administered by the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The director general is authorised to accept or reject applications to be on the Register of Lobbyists and to remove lobbyists from the register in appropriate circumstances. A review of the Contact with Lobbyists Code and the Register of Lobbyists will be conducted after the first 12 months of its operation. The review will be aimed at determining whether legislation is required to regulate the activities of lobbyists. The government is mindful that the Corruption and Crime Commission is continuing to investigate the activities of certain lobbyists and this could in turn lead to recommendations concerning the regulation of lobbyists. A review in 12 months' time will therefore be able to take account of any recommendations emerging from the CCC.

I table the Contact with Lobbyists Code.

[See paper 2510.]