



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024–25

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Mr Damian Cantwell AM CSC

In relation to: Administrative funding, current level and determination of original amount

Hearing: 10 November 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 7-8

Transcript provided: 12 November 2025

Answer Due: 19 November 2025

Mr Cantwell took on notice the following question(s):

MR EMERSON: Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask about administrative funding. What is the current level of administrative funding?

MR EMERSON: Can you walk me through the background of when that was introduced and why?

Mr Cantwell: Admin funding. Okay, so it is, as I am sure you are aware, not able to be spent upon electoral matters but rather for administrative matters only. Look, it has been a constant throughout my tenure as the Commissioner. I cannot comment without going back to the history of it. That might be contained in reports by the Commission earlier on, and that is evolution in legislative terms. So it looked at the legislation around the governing of it and ...(indistinct)... [11.34.35] changed in my time as Commissioner. Unless Ro can, given his extended tenure in the Commission, speak to the history, how it was developed and how it may have changed over time outside my tenure, then I would have to take that on notice and get back to you as to how that might look. But Ro, do you have any background scoop on the administrative funding?

Mr Spence: Sure, and just apologies, I am not going to be able to find the exact current figure for quarterlies.

MR EMERSON: It is 27-something. Sorry, I should know it too, but 27,000 a year I believe, something like that.

Mr Spence: Yes, yes. A lot of the understanding of the usage of administrative funding comes from explanatory statements at the time of passing them. It limits the ability to use administrative funding on anything of electoral matter; state, federal or territory. And then it largely talks about it being used as a means for MLAs and political parties to administer their offices, and in particular drawing attention to the need to adhere and comply with the Funding and Disclosure Scheme. The administrative burden of gift reporting, annual reporting, election reporting expenditure are

substantial and the money is very much there to assist parties and MLAs to staff or conduct or engage external consultants in order to do that. Noting, of course, who has the obligations for the reporting are in the instrument. And yes, so purchasing of hardware, equipment in an office, staffing, those kinds of elements. Quite specifically not election material generation.

MR EMERSON: Advertisements and so on, sure. And during your time, how is that figure set and is it just indexed or has there been—

Mr Spence: There is a calculation in the Electoral Act that determines the quarterly amount and it is based on a per-MLA basis in that quarter, and so it is prorated if there are casual vacancies or anything like that.

Mr Cantwell: So just the figure for the figure ending September 25, per MLA it was \$6,968.93.

Mr Spence: Per MLA per quarter.

MR EMERSON: And the original, like, the base amount, you know where that original amount was determined? Is that covered in the explanatory statement?

Mr Cantwell: I do not know.

Mr Spence: I do not know either. It is too long ago.

Mr Cantwell: We could do some research as to how that was formulated at the time or the basis for it. They are probably available in other Assembly records as well but, if you wish, we could take on notice from what we can determine. But this would be a matter ultimately for the Assembly deliberations at the time and we could provide advice as we could see it, if you wish us. We could take it on notice.

ACT Electoral Commission: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The earliest reference identified by the Electoral Commission to the need for providing Members of the Legislative Assembly with administrative funding appears in the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety's Review of Campaign Financing Laws in the ACT report (September 2011). The report states:

“the Committee considers that Administrative Funding should be provided to political parties, similar to that set out in Part 6A of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 (NSW). This is considered in Part Three of this Chapter, ‘Direct and indirect public funding of elections’, in the sub-section ‘Acts in other jurisdictions’, as are comparable arrangements under the Electoral Act 1992 (Qld)”.

The committee subsequently recommended:

“Administrative Funding be provided to Members elected to the Legislative Assembly at a general election, based on the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 (NSW), Part 6A. All Administrative Funding should be subject to acquittal and audit.”

The establishment of the inaugural \$20,000 amount of administrative funding per MLA per year first appears in the Electoral (Election Finance Reform) Amendment Bill 2011, a private member's bill introduced to the Assembly by Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA.

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The Government's response to the Committee's *Review of Campaign Financing Laws in the ACT* report refers to the \$20,000 figure first proposed in the bill:

"this discussion will focus primarily on the new amount at play, which is a figure of \$20 000 per MLA per year, as proposed under the Election Finance Reform Bill... The Election Finance Reform Bill seeks to implement this recommendation by creating a scheme whereby MLAs and their parties are reimbursed for administrative expenses of up to \$20 000 per MLA per year."

The Government's response also outlined the purpose of administrative funding:

"The Government understands that the payment of administrative amounts was included in the bill to counteract the additional burden of extra reporting and address concerns about restricting the right to free speech."

A further reference to the intended purpose of the funding is found in Hansard from the Eighth Assembly (pages 1942–1943), where Mr Rattenbury MLA stated:

"Administrative funding is currently paid to parties and non-party MLAs to cover the costs of administering the reporting requirements for political expenditure. This was brought in in 2012 as part of the reforms that were done in the last Assembly to enable parties to essentially cover the accounting and bookkeeping administration costs associated with the significant reporting requirements contained in those reforms. It is specifically not to be used for funding of elections. Currently, the payment made to each MLA is \$20,000 per annum and that is indexed."

Review of Campaign Financing Laws in the ACT report:

https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/373431/Campaign_Financing_Report_2011.pdf

Electoral (Election finance Reform) Amendment Bill 2011:

https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/b/db_43458/

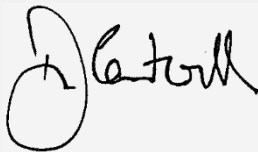
Government response to Campaign Finance reform report:

https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/373430/7th_JCS07_campaign_finance_reform.pdf

Hansard from eighth assembly:

<https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/8th-assembly/2014/PDF/20140805.pdf>

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders



Signature:

Date: 18 November 2025

By the ACT Electoral Commissioner, Mr Damain Cantwell AM CSC

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