

April 2017

# Compliance Review Report

## National Party of Australia – Victoria

This report was originally published 28 July 2017. An amended version was published 16 August 2017. The amendment corrected an error in the text under 'Matters requiring future action' on page 4 of the original report.

## Contents

Purpose of this report .....	2
Disclosure obligations.....	2
Conduct of the review.....	2
Scope of the review .....	3
Stakeholder engagement.....	3
Review outcomes .....	4
1. Timely lodgement.....	4
2. Accuracy in reporting – amendments .....	4
Matters requiring future action .....	4
Conclusion.....	5

## Purpose of this report

Pursuant to subsection 316(2A) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act), this report provides the party agent of the National Party of Australia – Victoria (the party) with the Australian Electoral Commission's (AEC) assessment of the level of compliance of the 2015–16 annual disclosure return lodged on behalf of the party with disclosure obligations under sections 314AB, 314AC and 314AE of the Electoral Act.

## Disclosure obligations

Registered political parties and associated entities are required under Part XX of the Electoral Act to furnish returns.

Section 314AB of the Electoral Act requires the party agent of a registered political party to furnish a return within 16 weeks after the end of each financial year, disclosing:

- the total amount received by, or on behalf of, the party; during the financial year, together with the details specified by section 314AC of the Electoral Act;
- the total amount paid by, or on behalf of, the party, during the financial year; and
- the total outstanding amount, as at the end of the financial year, of all debts incurred by or on behalf of, the party together with the details specified by section 314AE of the Electoral Act.

Section 314AC of the Electoral Act provides that if the sum of all amounts received by, or on behalf of, the party from a person or organisation during a financial year is more than the threshold amount specified therein, the annual disclosure return must include the particulars of that sum.

Section 314AE of the Electoral Act provides that if the sum of all outstanding debts incurred by, or on behalf of, the party to a person or an organisation during a financial year is more than the threshold amount specified therein, the annual disclosure return must include the particulars of that sum.

For the 2015–16 financial year, the threshold was for sums in excess of \$13,000.

The Electoral Act is available in full [here](#).

## Conduct of the review

The authorised officer of the AEC has authority under subsection 316(2A) to require the production of documents and giving of evidence for the purpose of assessing compliance with the disclosure obligations required of registered political parties and associated entities under Part XX of the Electoral Act.

Subsection 316(2A) requires the party agent of a registered political party to produce the documents or other things referred to in a notice served by the authorised officer within the period and in the manner specified in the notice or to appear, at the time and place

specified in the notice, before the authorised officer to give evidence, either orally or in writing, and to produce the documents or other things referred to in the notice.

As part of this process, the authorised officer of the AEC served a notice on the party agent under subsection 316(2A) requiring the party to provide its financial records and other documents in relation to its financial operations for 2015–16.

### Scope of the review

The records which were requested by the AEC from the party were limited to those which enabled the AEC to assess the following aspects of compliance with its disclosure obligations under Part XX of the Electoral Act:

- the timeliness of lodgement of the annual disclosure return
- the completeness and accuracy of the financial disclosures made to the party's headquarters by a sample of its party units in the party's annual disclosure return for the 2015–16 financial year:
  - total receipts
  - total gifts in kind
  - individual receipts above \$13,000
  - total payments
  - total debts
  - individual debts above \$13,000

The AEC did not examine other aspects of the financial operations of the party such as the existence or effectiveness of internal controls.

### Stakeholder engagement

The AEC's general practice is to communicate with the relevant officer of the party by phone, email and/or face to face meetings as appropriate to cover the following topics:

- financial reports and documentation available from the party's accounting system
- compliance issues arising from the AEC review of the financial reports and documentation provided by the party
- required and suggested amendments to the annual disclosure return which arise from the compliance review
- potential enhancements in the party's understanding of disclosure obligations and accounting processes to improve future compliance.

During the review the party provided documentation to the AEC as requested and within set timeframes.

A draft compliance review report was issued by the authorised officer of the AEC on

11 April 2017. The party was provided with an opportunity to comment on the draft report by 28 April 2017. The party did not have any comments on the report, however lodged an amended return on 12 April 2017.

## Review outcomes

### 1. Timely lodgement

Subsection 314AB(1) of the Electoral Act requires the party agent of the registered political party to lodge an annual disclosure return with the AEC within 16 weeks after the end of the financial year. As lodgement occurred by the due date of 20 October 2016, it complied with the requirement under s 314AB(1) to lodge a return for a registered political party within 16 weeks after the end of the financial year.

### 2. Accuracy in reporting – amendments

After examining the documents provided by the party for the review, the authorised officer of the AEC identified one issue relating to compliance with disclosure obligations under Part XX of the Electoral Act. Note that this review was limited to examining the accuracy of amounts reported by the party in respect of its party units, by reference to an examination of a sample of party units.

#### Total Debts

Paragraph 314AEA(1)(c) of the Electoral Act requires the party agent to report the total outstanding amount as at the end of the financial year of all debts incurred by or, on behalf of, the party.

Total reportable debts of the party were under-stated in the party's 2015–16 annual disclosure return. The amount recorded as total debts in the return is required to be amended by the party in order to ensure compliance with the Electoral Act. The relevant amendment is set out below.

Part 1: Total Debts – amendment	
Total disclosed in return	\$125,206
Amended total	\$135,824

### Matters requiring future action

As well as the above amendment, the AEC noted immaterial variances between amounts disclosed in the party unit's records and by the party in its annual return. In one instance, a party unit's debts were not reported. It is recommended the party ensures the accuracy of future annual disclosure returns and therefore improve compliance with Part XX of the

Electoral Act by ensuring that all amounts recorded by party units are disclosed to, and accurately reported by, party headquarters.

## Conclusion

The authorised officer of the AEC for the purposes of subsection 316(2) of the Electoral Act has assessed the 2015–16 annual disclosure return for the party lodged with the AEC on 19 October 2016 complied with the requirement under s 314AB(1) of the Electoral Act to lodge a return for a registered political party within 16 weeks after the end of the financial year.

However, in view of the discrepancy identified, the return did not comply with the provisions of s 314AEA(1)(c) of the Electoral Act.

In view of the lodgement by the party agent on 12 April 2017 of an amendment to the party's 2015–16 annual disclosure return, the authorised officer of the AEC has assessed that the disclosure return (as amended) accurately includes the information required to be disclosed under the provisions of s 314AEA(1)(c) of the Electoral Act.