



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO FAIRFAX PUBLICATION OF 7 MARCH 2013

As a former MP and Australian Treasurer Mr Costello regularly attends and speaks at Liberal Party events for all Divisions of the Liberal Party.

He hosted a business breakfast in Melbourne attended by the Shadow Treasurer of Queensland in December 2011.

This had nothing to do with the Queensland Commission of Audit. Mr Costello was asked by the Queensland Government to conduct that an Audit after it was elected in March 2012.

Mr Costello was eminently qualified to do that Audit as the person who Commissioned the 1996 Commonwealth Audit – the forerunner of the Queensland Audit – and as Australia’s longest serving Treasurer delivering 10 surplus Budgets, and presiding over two sovereign upgrades for Australia to AAA.

The Queensland Treasurer did not make the comments alleged by the anonymous informant of Fairfax at the December 2011 breakfast. Mr Nicholls has issued a statement to that effect.

Fairfax was informed before publication today that ECG Advisory Solutions has not worked for SP AusNet since November of last year (see attachment of questions and answers). Notwithstanding that, today’s story prints multiple errors and shows ignorance of disclosure laws.

ECG chooses to disclose not only its current list of clients, but those with which it has had a relationship for a full year after the relationship has ended. This is consistent with the strictest disclosure regime in Victoria, which states:

(d) the names of persons for whom the Lobbyist has provided paid or unpaid services as a Lobbyist during the previous twelve months.

This is why SP AusNet is on the register even though the relationship ended in November 2012 – full public disclosure.

ECG adheres to this disclosure requirement in every jurisdiction.

ECG has no current business relationship with SP AusNet, Primary Health Care or ASG. These relationships concluded before the Audit made its 28 February 2013 recommendations.

Serco is represented in Queensland by another firm.



Mr Costello has never been contacted by CMC and has no knowledge of any complaint against him. He looks forward to the full facts being established.

ECG has referred the Fairfax publication to its lawyers.

Contact: David Gazard 0428-405-107

7 March 2013



ATTACHMENT

QUESTIONS FROM THE AGE:

- * What was Mr Costello's role raising funds for the LNP in Queensland ahead of the 2012 state election?
- * Is there a conflict between some of the recommendations of the independent audit, and ECG's role as lobbyist for Primary Healthcare , SP Ausnet, and other companies?
- * Has ECG's role lobbying for these companies been disclosed in the full 1000 page report, and/or to the Queensland government?
- * Mr Costello, on December 15, 2011, hosted a fundraiser for Tim Nicholls in Melbourne. Were potential ECG clients told at that event that Mr Costello would be "central in deciding which Queensland programs would be cut and which assets will be sold"?

ANSWERS:

Mr Costello has never been contacted by the CMC and finds it highly unusual that someone would contact The Age in Melbourne about this when he has never been contacted.

The answers to your questions are as follows

1. Although Mr Costello, over 20 years as a Federal MP, has had extensive contact with all Divisions of the Liberal Party and speaking at their meetings which he still continues to do he had no role in raising funds for the 2012 LNP State Election.
2. No. SP Ausnet is a Company which has assets in Victoria and to our knowledge has no business in Queensland. ECG has not represented the Company since November of last year. Mr Costello has never represented the Company.
3. ECG has never lobbied for SP Ausnet in Queensland or to the Queensland Government.
4. Mr Costello did not host a fundraiser for Mr Nicholls in Melbourne. He attended a business briefing for no charge and at which no funds were raised.