

— Rear Window

## Teals join party hacks in the Chairman's Lounge

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Columnist



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Qantas has finally secured a teal sweep.

Newish member for North Sydney **Kylea Tink** updated her register of members' interests last month to note her complimentary membership of both the Qantas Chairman's Lounge and Virgin Australia's equivalent, Beyond. She joins every single other teal MP in membership of the former, and most in membership of the latter.

All members of parliament (and their partners) are generally offered membership to both major airlines' top-tier private lounges. At stake is much-valued privacy, better food, fancy fittings, and personalised comfort so exclusive it cannot be bought. Most take it up. But not all.

Ever since the teals dislodged a raft of inner-city Liberals from what had been safe seats on the promise of a better (and more environmentally friendly) politics at last year's federal election, we've wondered how many would proceed to accept such hospitality.

We now have our answer. Listed as members of the Chairman's Lounge is the aforementioned Tink, as well as fellow teal crossbenchers **Kate Chaney, Zoe Daniel, Monique Ryan, Sophie Scamps**, and **Allegra Spender**, as well as teal-ish independents **Zali Steggall** and **Helen Haines**.

Taking up Virgin's Beyond Lounge membership is a more select group consisting of Daniel, Haines, Scamps, Tink and Spender.

Bigger armchairs are the least Chairman's Lounge members can expect.

This isn't unusual for federal parliamentarians. The overwhelming majority also list their membership of at least the Chairman's Lounge. Even most of the Greens, alongside non-teal independents such as **Andrew Wilkie, David Pocock** and **Dai Le**.

This is a realm of soft lobbying in which Qantas reigns supreme. Still, as noted by transparency site Open Politics [<https://openpolitics.au/analysis/flying-high>], holdouts do exist.

According to her disclosures, Finance Minister Senator **Katy Gallagher** must make do with the regular lounges, alongside Communications Minister **Michelle Rowland**.

On the Coalition side, **Warren Entsch**, **David Fawcett**, **Anne Ruston**, and **Matt Canavan** don't disclose membership of either club, nor do One Nation members **Pauline Hanson** or **Malcolm Roberts**. Greens members **Barbara Pocock** and **Max Chandler-Mather** appear immune to the airlines' lures.

**Jacqui Lambie** is another cleanskin, though in slightly different circumstances. She reportedly lost [<https://www.smh.com.au/national/why-jacqui-lambie-has-been-banned-from-qantas-for-six-months-20210526-p57vfu.html>] her Chairman's Lounge membership in 2021 after a verbal altercation with Qantas staff at a reception desk. She doesn't appear to have taken up Virgin's Beyond in the interim.

As part of its capital route launch, Rex offered all MPs access to its own lounges in 2021. Alas, according to their disclosures, only seven MPs have taken it up. The rest obviously haven't heard about the scones [<https://www.afr.com/rear-window/stuck-in-a-time-warp-with-rex-s-john-sharp-20230320-p5ctn3>].

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