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# MPs warned to declare free trips and travel after seven politicians fail to meet deadlines



Independent MP Helen Haines. Picture: Kym Smith

**EXCLUSIVE**

By **ELLEN WHINNETT**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

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Australian MPs have been reminded of their obligations to promptly declare when they take free trips and other hospitality, after seven were revealed to have failed to declare sponsored travel and/or hospitality within the proscribed time frame.

Trips to Washington, Honolulu and Taipei have since been added to members and senators' registers of interests, following questions by integrity campaigner Sean Johnson, who tracks social media to see which MPs are travelling, and at whose expense.

Mr Johnson said MPs were required to declare sponsored travel and hospitality within 28 days, or risk being found in serious contempt of parliament and dealt with accordingly.



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PAIGE TAYLOR

social media and in parliamentary speeches.

Independent MP Helen Haines says it is important “irrespective” of who is in government to stand up and ask... questions about the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. “It’s really important, every time, irrespective of who’s in government to stand up and ask questions when it comes to the expenditure of ... [More](#)

Special Minister of State Don Farrell issued a reminder for MPs to obey the rules.

“It is the responsibility of all Members and Senators to update their register of interest, in line with the relevant processes for the House and the Senate,” he said.

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Independent Helen Haines and Labor MP Luke Gosling failed to promptly declare a week-long trip to Washington DC and New York as guests of the US State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program in January.

The pair were among a group of 10 MPs who attended the trip, which included flights, accommodation and incidentals.

The trip should have been declared by February 18. Both MPs updated their register in late March, with Ms Haines’ office blaming an oversight for the delay, and Mr Gosling’s office giving no reason to Mr Johnson for missing the deadline.

Liberal MP Terry Young and Labor’s Libby Coker failed to promptly declare a trip to Taiwan in early December. The pair were among a group of six MPs who spent five days in Taiwan courtesy of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Australia.

The trip was widely reported in mainstream and social media, and the four other MPs declared the free flights, accommodation and meals they received.



Libby Coker. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Gary Ramage



Terry Young.

Ms Coker and Mr Young updated their registers after Mr Johnson’s Open Politics project approached their offices.

Open Politics had recently revealed Liberal senator David Van failed to meet the deadline to declare a trip to Egypt to attend the COP27 climate conference, paid for by Conservatives for Conservation. Labor Senator Deb O’Neill and Labor MP Peter Khalil both missed the deadline for declaring a trip they and other colleagues took to Washington DC in September to attend a forum, hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China. Both MPs blamed administrative oversights in their office, and delays in reimbursement from IPAC, for missing the deadlines.

Mr Khalil undertook an audit of his travel after Mr Johnston’s approach and discovered flights for a second trip he made, to the Australian American Leadership Dialogue talks in Hawaii, in October, had not been declared. He has since declared the trip on his register, showing return flights to Honolulu were provided by Hawaiian Airlines.

**ELLEN WHINNETT, ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Ellen Whinnett is The Australian’s associate editor. She is a dual Walkley Award-winning journalist and best-selling author, with a specific interest in national security, investigations and features. She is a form... [Read more](#)



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Hi Sean

**B** **I** **”**

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**Terry** 2 HOURS AGO

Penalties should apply as they would in corporate life . Corruption in Government is not unknown and free trips can be categorised in the same manner as “ free lunches “

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**Gerard** 2 HOURS AGO

Blame oversight !! That’s outright incompetence or a lie ! until someone pointed out to these puritans they would have done nothing

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**Michael** 2 HOURS AGO

Is there some uniform requirement for ALP politicians? Same Dark blue suit, red tie and all carrying the same disposable coffee cup.

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**jody** 2 HOURS AGO

Keep up the good work, integrity campaigner, Sean Johnson. Keep the bastards honest!

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**Craig** 3 HOURS AGO

Imagine the average taxpayer failing to report to a government department on time.. we get no warning, just fines and threats of more action. They get a slap with a wet lettuce..

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**Brad (the quiet Australian)**

3 HOURS AGO

Independents who entered the Parliament on an integrity ticket are now blaming oversights for their tardiness. It’s not a good look.

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**Iver** 11 HOURS AGO

There will be no improvement in reporting until those failing to meet the rules are penalised. For example first offence results in 1 week suspension

for the remaining term of the Parliament.

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