



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

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MPs outraged to learn Parliamentary Sporting Club is a lobby group

Parliamentarians were outraged to learn that the Australian Parliamentary Sporting Club (APSC) is a registered lobby group following a name change on the Register of Lobbyists on Monday that drew attention to the matter.

The APSC is a self-described 'grass roots sports club' focused on encouraging participation in a wide range of sports during parliamentary sitting weeks. The club, through paid membership, brings together parliamentarians, their staff, and public servants to play in friendly, non-partisan, sporting fixtures.

The listing on the Lobbyist Register is a name change, with the APSC formerly listed as Sports Hydrant. According to its website, Sports Hydrant is a sports marketing and communications business.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is the Chair of the APSC and lists the organisation on his register of interests.

Comments attributable to Kate Chaney MP, Independent Member for Curtin:

"It will come as a complete surprise to most sports-loving parliamentarians and their staff that when they joined the Australian Parliamentary Sports Club, they were paying to be members of a registered lobbyist group that represents clients that include the gambling industry.

"After this name change on the Register of Lobbyists, all Parliamentarians are on notice to declare their membership on their register of interests.

"What hope can our communities have that this Government will make decisions about gambling reform in the public interest, when the Prime Minister is Chair of a lobbyist group acting for the gambling industry?"

"This is another egregious example of the inseparable connection between sport and gambling in Australia, and the pervasiveness of lobbyists in Parliament House.

"I encourage Parliamentarians to either resign from the lobby group APSC or explain to their communities how their position on gambling reform is affected by their membership of this lobby group.

"The APSC must come clean with its members that they are signing up for more than a friendly game of basketball."

Comments attributable to Australian Capital Territory Independent Senator David Pocock:

"The Parliamentary Sports Club provides a unique and valued opportunity to build relationships

between parliamentarians and their staff across the political spectrum. For this to be leveraged as a lobbying opportunity by sponsors whose business or members cause social harm is hugely disappointing and something I have raised with the Club.

“Registration on the Federal Lobbyist register confirms parliamentary sport is being used as a lobbying mechanism and I think that undermines its value and core purpose.

“It effectively means that the Prime Minister is now the Chair of a lobbying organisation.”

Comments attributable to Dr Monique Ryan, Independent Member for Kooyong:

“To paraphrase Groucho Marx, I’m not signing up for any Parliamentary Sports Club which serves up gambling industry lobbying with its early morning basketball games.

“I’m resigning from the club today. Under my Clean Up Politics Act - my private member’s bill on transparency in lobbying – this sort of influence by stealth would be laid open for all to see. The government should debate and pass the bill this year. We need to shine a light on lobbyists and their actions in Parliament.”

Comments attributable to Allegra Spender MP, Independent Member for Wentworth:

“Sports groups in Parliament are an opportunity to build relations in good faith across the parliament. For this to be manipulated by a registered lobbying group with interests in the gambling industry is frankly unacceptable.”

Comments attributable to Dr Sophie Scamps MP, Independent Member for Mackellar:

“I’m sickened that one of the biggest lobbyists for the gambling industry has been welcomed into our parliamentary sports club as a sponsor - essentially buying the opportunity for soft but direct influence. The gambling industry is doing enormous harm, particularly to our children, by normalising gambling through sport. All sport should be free of the insidious influence of gambling sponsorship and advertising. Get them out.”

Comments attributable to Dr Helen Haines MP, Independent Member for Indi:

“While Australians wait for the Government to take serious action on gambling harm, the APSC - chaired by the Prime Minister himself - is acting on behalf of clients that include the gambling industry.”

ENDS

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