

# **Matter involving Mr Richard Welch, Member for the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region**

## **Investigation report**

**April 2026**



# Summary

## Allegation

It is alleged that on or after the 31 December 2024, Mr Richard Welch, Member for the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region, permitted, encouraged and/or required electorate officers to perform party-specific activity in a way which may contravene the members of parliament Code of Conduct.

## Investigation

This matter was referred to the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission (the Commission) on 3 December 2025 and 17 December 2025.

The Commission commenced an investigation on 3 February 2026 to substantiate or not substantiate the allegation on the balance of probabilities, the civil standard of proof.

The Commission concluded the investigation and provided this report to the Privileges Committee of the Victorian Legislative Council on 15 April 2026.

The Commission's investigation **did not substantiate** the allegation to the civil standard.

## Findings

The Commission did not obtain any evidence to demonstrate that Mr Welch permitted, encouraged and/or required electorate officers to perform party-specific activity, including printing.

The investigation found that Mr Welch maintained a clear distinction between electorate work and party-specific work and that this distinction was well understood by his staff.

On this basis, the Commission has **not made any finding of parliamentary misconduct** in relation to the conduct of Mr Welch.

# Investigation report

## Context and allegations

1. This matter arose in the context of media reporting in early December 2025, which alleged that Mr Richard Welch, Member for the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region, invited members of a political party to contact his electorate officers to arrange usually 'same-day' printing on a large-format printer in his electorate office. Subsequent media reports stated that Mr Welch admitted to making this offer but denied that it was against the rules as he had personally paid for the printer and toner, and no party-related printing work was carried out during work hours.
2. The Commission first received a referral regarding this matter on 3 December 2025. The referrer raised concerns that the conduct reported in the media may be a misuse of public resources and may breach the members of parliament Code of Conduct (the Code of Conduct).
3. On 17 December 2025, the Commission received a second referral alleging that Mr Welch may have directed electorate officers to perform party-specific activities.
4. The Commission conducted a thorough assessment of the following allegations:
  - Allegation 1: On or after the 31 December 2024, Mr Welch permitted, encouraged and/or required electorate officers to perform party-specific activity in a way which may contravene the Code of Conduct.
  - Allegation 2: On or after the 31 December 2024, Mr Welch used parliamentary budgets and allowances for a purpose other than public duties.
5. The Commission obtained further information under section 10 of the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* (Vic) (PWSI Act). This information supported Mr Welch's reported claim that he had personally paid for the printer, toner and paper.
6. On this basis, the Commission dismissed Allegation 2 under section 11(2) of the PWSI Act as it was not supported by sufficient evidence.

## Investigation

7. The Commission commenced an investigation into Allegation 1 under section 21(1) of the PWSI Act on 3 February 2026. The purpose of the investigation was to substantiate or not substantiate the allegation on the balance of probabilities, the civil standard of proof.
8. The Commission considered the following information during the investigation:
  - evidence obtained from interviews with current and former electorate officers in the office of Mr Welch
  - information obtained by the Commission prior to commencing the investigation
  - media reports relating to the allegation.
9. The Commission can only investigate conduct that occurred on or after its establishment on 31 December 2024. Mr Welch's original offer of same-day printing was allegedly made in March 2024. While the Commission considered the context around the original 2024 offer, no documentary evidence was sought relating to this time period.
10. Mr Welch cooperated fully with the Commission's investigation.

11. The Commission concluded the investigation and provided this report to the Privileges Committee of the Victorian Legislative Council on 15 April 2026.

## **What the evidence showed**

The evidence **did not substantiate** the allegation.

### **The large-format printer was not used for party-specific activity**

12. Information obtained by the Commission supported Mr Welch's reported claim that he personally purchased a large-format printer for use in his electorate office in 2024.
13. No evidence was obtained that the large-format printer was used to print party campaign material or other party-related material.
14. The large-format printer was used primarily for electorate office and community-facing purposes, including printing of maps, office planning displays, event signage and issue-based material for community forums.
15. Witness testimony suggested that the main benefit of the large-format printer was to avoid costs and delays experienced from outsourcing large-format printing jobs.

### **No printing requests were received from party members**

16. The Commission did not obtain any evidence suggesting that on or after 31 December 2024, other members of parliament, branch officials or other party members made requests to Mr Welch's electorate office for large-format or same-day printing of party-specific material.
17. The electorate office received some requests for printing from community groups, such as for local events or meetings. None of these examples were political or party related.

### **Mr Welch's electorate office staff understood the rules**

18. Evidence indicated that staff in Mr Welch's electorate office clearly understood that electorate officers were not permitted to undertake party-related activities such as election campaigning, membership solicitation, fundraising or directing how a person should vote.
19. Some witnesses noted that they found the boundary between effective community advocacy and party politics can, at times, be difficult to distinguish in practice. Despite this, Mr Welch's staff appeared to have a good understanding of what activities a member should and should not direct electorate officers to perform.

### **Mr Welch did not permit, encourage or require electorate officers to perform party-specific activity**

20. The Commission did not obtain any evidence that Mr Welch permitted, encouraged and/or required electorate officers to perform party-specific activity, including printing.
21. Witnesses described a strong compliance culture within the office where the boundaries of the rules were discussed. For example, staff ensured that a draft community survey did not include questions on voter intention. Witness testimony demonstrated that Mr Welch provided guidance and made corrections where necessary to ensure staff operated within the rules. Examples included:
  - holding a "very strict" stance that electorate office staff take annual leave when engaging in any political campaign activity
  - stepping in to ensure party membership forms were not distributed at a community event.

## Findings

The Commission **makes no finding of parliamentary misconduct** in relation to the conduct of Mr Richard Welch, Member for the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

22. Victorian members of parliament must observe the Code of Conduct when carrying out their public duties<sup>1</sup>. If a member is found to contravene the Code of Conduct, the Commission can make a finding of parliamentary misconduct.
23. Section 12(b) of the Code of Conduct requires members to comply with any law, rule or guidance regarding the use of public resources. The *Parliamentary Administration Act 2005* (Vic) (PA Act) is one such law. Section 30(5) of the PA Act states that a member must not determine that an electorate officer “can, should or must perform a party specific activity”. Party-specific activity is defined as any activity for the dominant purpose of directing how a person should vote at an election.<sup>2</sup>
24. The Commission’s investigation **did not substantiate** the allegation that Mr Welch permitted, encouraged and/or required electorate officers to perform party-specific activity.
25. The evidence obtained in this investigation indicates that Mr Welch maintained a clear distinction between electorate work and party-specific work, and that this distinction was well understood by his staff.
26. This outcome and finding are important in the context of an issue that was reported in the media and had the propensity to erode public trust in elected representatives. It is important for the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region electorate and the broader community to know that matters like this are independently investigated.
27. Victorians rightly expect their members of parliament to act with integrity and to use public resources appropriately. This is essential to sustaining confidence in elected representatives and in this matter, Mr Welch was found to do so.

## Report tabling

28. The Commission considers that transmitting this investigation report to the Legislative Council is not contrary to the public interest. Mr Welch did not indicate a preference regarding whether this report be tabled in Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> The Code of Conduct is set out in Part 3 of the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* (Vic)

<sup>2</sup> For the full definition of party-specific activity see section 30(6) of the *Parliamentary Administration Act 2005* (Vic)

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