



Registrar's Inquiry into Hon Michael Wood's compliance with the requirements of Appendix B of the Standing Orders

Report of the Registrar of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests of Members of Parliament

July 2023

Presented to the House of Representatives pursuant to clause 16(8) of Appendix B of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives

Contents

Introduction	2
The Inquiry	4
Meeting with the Secretary of the Cabinet	4
Response from Mr Wood	5
Meeting with Mr Wood, Auckland, 28 June 2023	6
Correspondence with Mr Wood about amending his previous returns	10
Concluding observations	10
A matter that may warrant the further attention of the House	10
A question of privilege	11

Registrar's Inquiry into Hon Michael Wood's compliance with Appendix B of the Standing Orders

Recommendation

The Registrar of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests has conducted an Inquiry into a matter raised about Hon Michael Wood's compliance with Appendix B of the Standing Orders, and has

- determined that this matter involves a question of privilege
- identified a matter that may warrant the further attention of the House.

The Registrar recommends that the House take note of this report.

Introduction

- [1] On 7 June 2023, as provided for in clause 16 of Appendix B of Standing Orders, I received a letter from Chris Penk MP, requesting an Inquiry into the non-disclosure of the Hon Michael Wood's financial interests. In making his request, Mr Penk outlined the specific matter that he wanted investigated, which was a failure to comply with Standing Orders by Mr Wood and advised me that he had reasonable grounds for his belief, as required under clauses 16(2)(a) and (b). Mr Penk informed me that, as required by Standing Orders, he had also conveyed a copy of his request to me to the member who was the subject of the request, Hon Michael Wood.
- [2] On receipt of Mr Penk's request, I conducted a preliminary view of the request to determine if, in my opinion, an inquiry was warranted. In making this determination, I was required to take account of the degree of importance of the matter under inquiry, and whether the matter may involve a breach of the obligations to make a return, and whether the matter was technical or trivial.
- [3] In reaching my determination, I drew on statements by the Prime Minister and Mr Wood in the preceding days, following the revelation that Mr Wood had continued to hold Auckland International Airport Limited (AIA) shares whilst serving as Minister of Transport, and had not divested himself of them after receiving advice repeatedly from the Cabinet Office to do so. The Cabinet Manual has specific provisions governing ministerial conflicts of interest, which are separate and additional to the responsibilities of members of Parliament set out in Appendix B of Standing Orders. Ministers of the Crown must comply with both sets of requirements.
- [4] I also drew on elements of the extensive media coverage of the issue, including several statements by Mr Wood in which he revealed that he had in fact held those shares since he was a young man. I was aware from looking at previous copies of the Register of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests of Members of Parliament that Mr Wood had not declared any shareholdings until 2022, even though he had been a Member of Parliament since 2016.

- [5] I had also received a letter from Mr Wood the day before, on 6 June, in which he admitted he had not completed his pecuniary interest returns as he should have. His letter stated:

Dear Sir Maarten,

I am writing to bring to your attention an oversight on my part regarding my return for the Register of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests.

I have recently become aware that while I correctly declared my shares in Auckland International Airport Limited and Contact Energy Limited on the Registers for 2022 and 2023, I have not correctly declared my interest in these shares on previous registers.

Can you please advise me as to how I can amend previous registers in order to correct this oversight, for which I apologise unreservedly.

Kind regards,

Hon. Michael Wood

- [6] I replied to Mr Wood's letter on the same day advising him of the standard procedure for correcting any errors or omissions in previous returns, as set out in clause 20 of Appendix B. I said I looked forward to receiving his revisions shortly. They were submitted on 22 June.
- [7] Mr Wood's letter of 6 June provided confirmation—before Mr Penk wrote to me the next day—that Mr Penk's concern about Mr Wood's non-disclosure of his financial interests was well-founded.
- [8] Also on 7 June, in answer to a parliamentary question, the Prime Minister revealed that, in the period between November 2020 and March 2023, the Cabinet Office had sought to confirm that the then Minister of Transport had divested himself of these shares. "Throughout the process, Michael Wood confirmed that he was about to or was in the process of divesting the shareholdings," the Prime Minister said.¹ But in fact, Mr Wood still owned shares in Auckland International Airport Limited and also in Contact Energy Limited.
- [9] On the basis of Mr Wood's letter to me of 6 June, the information made public in the House on 7 June by the Prime Minister, and extensive associated media coverage of Mr Wood's predicament, I formed the opinion that there was indeed a matter that required investigation relating to the member's obligations as a member of Parliament, being (i) the non-declaration of a member's pecuniary interests, and (ii) not correcting errors and omissions in previous returns.
- [10] Accordingly, on the morning of 8 June, I spoke to Mr Penk and Mr Wood to advise them of my decision to hold an inquiry and followed up with letters of confirmation. I noted to Mr Wood that once I had received his reply to my invitation to respond to the matter that had been raised, I would seek a meeting with him.

¹ See the Prime Minister's response to Question No. 2 [here](#).

The Inquiry

- [11] Standing Orders set out certain requirements for conducting an inquiry of this nature. Firstly, the Registrar must invite the member who is the subject of the inquiry to provide a response to the matter under inquiry within ten working days. Mr Wood was advised of that opportunity in my letter of 8 June, and his response was received on 22 June.
- [12] Further information may be sought from the member who made the request for an inquiry, from the member who is the subject of the inquiry, and from any other person that the Registrar considers may have relevant information. The Auditor-General may also be consulted.

Meeting with the Secretary of the Cabinet

- [13] Given that the matter of Mr Wood's shareholding in Auckland International Airport Limited had become public in relation to a possible conflict of interest Mr Wood might have had as a Minister, and because the interactions between the Minister and the Cabinet Office had been the focus of intense media attention, I determined that it would be helpful for the inquiry if I met the Secretary of the Cabinet, Rachel Hayward. My intent was simply to understand the nature of the Cabinet Office's processes for interacting with Ministers in relation to any possible conflicts of interest.
- [14] The Cabinet Secretary and I met on 14 June. We acknowledged at the beginning of our meeting that, although we both had roles in relation to pecuniary interests and conflicts of interest, those roles are undertaken independently of each other, one with a parliamentary mandate, and the other established within the Cabinet Manual. I emphasised that my request for a meeting arose simply because there had been considerable discussion in the media, including by Mr Wood, about his ministerial responsibilities in relation to conflicts of interest, including matters which I had been unaware of previously.
- [15] The Secretary advised that she would not be able to share with me the content of any of her discussions with Mr Wood, in his capacity as a member of the Executive. Similarly, I did not discuss the detail of Mr Wood's declarations in the Register.
- [16] The Secretary noted that the Cabinet Manual sets out in some detail the expectations of Ministers in relation to Ministers' interests, identifying conflicts of interest (including pecuniary interests, and interests of family, whānau, and close associates) and managing conflicts of interest. The Cabinet Manual requirements are in addition to those outlined for members of Parliament in Appendix B of Standing Orders.
- [17] The Cabinet Secretary informed me that the Cabinet Office reviews the Parliamentary Register of Pecuniary Interests each year after it is published, as the Register informs Cabinet Office staff in their discussions—held annually—with Ministers. Induction sessions for new Ministers on the provisions of the Cabinet Manual are held individually, in person. These meetings cover obligations and guidance in relation to ministerial interests. The Cabinet Office maintains its own information about ministerial interests. Those records are confidential and are held on behalf of the Prime Minister. Support and guidance are provided by Cabinet Office staff to Ministers to identify and

manage conflicts of interest. The Cabinet Office does not provide advice in relation to Ministers' obligations as members of Parliament.

Response from Mr Wood

[18] Mr Wood's reply to my invitation to respond to the matter under inquiry was received on 22 June.

[19] He stated:

In 1998, I purchased approximately 1,530 shares in Auckland International Airport Limited. Shortly thereafter I also purchased 343 shares in Contact Energy Limited.

In 2017, when preparing my first return for the Register of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests, I omitted to include these due to an oversight on my part, for which I apologise unreservedly. These were shares that I had held for a long time and had never traded, so they were not at the forefront of my mind.

In late 2020, on becoming a Minister, because of the requirements of my role I examined my pecuniary interests more closely and commenced the process of working with my investment advisor to sell the shares in both companies.

In early 2021, engagement with my investment advisor confirmed the shares in Auckland International Airport Limited had been sold. However, this in fact referred to a different set of shares that had previously been owned by the J M Fairey Trust and were divested in 2019. I therefore misunderstood this situation and took it to mean that the personal shares that I had recently asked to be sold, had been divested of.

In February 2022, while preparing my return for that year's Register of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests, my records confirmed that the shares in Auckland International Airport Limited and Contact Energy Limited that I held personally had not, in fact, been sold. Accordingly, I included them on my return for 2022 and recommenced the process of working with my investment advisor to sell them.

As you will also note, I included both sets of shares on my 2023 return as well. I did not, however, move to correct earlier registers, which was an oversight on my part that I apologise for.

[20] And, in conclusion:

I recognise that I have neither been proactive enough, nor shown sufficient focus in declaring and managing my pecuniary interests. I apologise for this and am grateful for your guidance in assisting me to correct these omissions.

Meeting with Mr Wood, Auckland, 28 June 2023

- [21] With a staff member from the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, I travelled to Auckland on Wednesday, 28 June to meet Mr Wood. He had another person with him.
- [22] I opened the discussion by noting my understanding that the meeting we were about to have constituted the major component of the Inquiry I had decided to undertake, as requested by Mr Penk. I referred to our correspondence of the previous week, and my telephone call with the member. I said that as Registrar, Standing Orders empowered me to seek information from the member, and from any other person that I considered may have relevant information.
- [23] I advised Mr Wood that I had had only one other meeting for the purposes of the Inquiry, with the Cabinet Secretary, Rachel Hayward, on 14 June, but that the focus of that session was on how the Cabinet Office conducted its conflicts of interest role, as set out in the Cabinet Manual. I said to Mr Wood that, because questions about his pecuniary interests had come into public view because of his ministerial role, the timing and nature of his discussions with the Cabinet Secretary and her staff were of interest to me. As noted previously, I emphasised to Mr Wood that the Cabinet Secretary had informed me prior to our meeting that she was not able to divulge the content of any of her conversations with him.
- [24] I also made clear that the proceedings of the conduct of the meeting we were about to conduct, and the inquiry, were strictly confidential, and requested Mr Wood and the person accompanying him to abide strictly by that provision. (It turned out that the accompanying person was a senior partner in a leading law firm, something which I had not been made aware of before the meeting. After some consideration, I decided to allow that gentleman to remain in the room, but only as an observer, and adviser—if requested—to Mr Wood).
- [25] I also noted to Mr Wood that in a media interview on the day the inquiry was announced, he had stated that he thought holding an inquiry was “appropriate and a useful exercise to go through at the moment” and that he hoped that the inquiry could achieve “absolute clarity and transparency”. I said I very much hoped for those outcomes as well. He said during the interview “I’ve never, ever deliberately misled anyone”.
- [26] I then invited Mr Wood to offer some opening remarks, in response to Mr Penk’s letter to me alleging that Mr Wood had not fulfilled his obligations under Standing Orders, in relation to declaring his pecuniary interests.
- [27] Mr Wood noted at the outset that he recognised fully that his shares in Auckland International Airport Limited, and Contact Energy Limited, “ought to have been declared”. To have not declared them prior to 2022 “was an error”. There was “no particular reason I didn’t declare”. Mr Wood said his engagement with the returns process “was not as fulsome as it should have been”.
- [28] I asked the member if he had taken any advice over completing his first return of pecuniary interests in 2017. He didn’t answer directly but said that his normal process was to ask his Senior Private Secretary or his Executive Assistant to bring his previous year’s return, and then he would revise and edit that earlier document. “Make any

- alterations". That process was how the error of non-disclosure of the AIA and Contact shares had "compounded over the years 2017–2020".
- [29] Mr Wood said that in 2020, he had been involved in discussions with his investment adviser over how better to arrange his financial affairs. The intent had been to move shares that were in the JM Fairey Family Trust to a managed fund.
- [30] I then proceeded to ask Mr Wood a number of questions. Why was it, I asked, that his Auckland International Airport Limited and Contact Energy Limited shares were not declared in his first return of pecuniary interests. He said it was an "oversight". It had "never occurred" to him to declare them. It was "an error—it was inadvertent".
- [31] I asked Mr Wood if he had ever sought advice in relation to preparing his pecuniary interests return. Mr Wood replied that he "didn't recall ever seeking advice" until he contacted me on 6 June 2023. He had never sought legal advice over what he should do in completing his returns, or "outsourced anything to do with the process".
- [32] I responded that seeking legal advice was not generally necessary. A core part of my role as Registrar, as set out in clause 14(b) of Appendix B, is to "provide advice and guidance to members in connection with their obligations under [this Appendix]". I am assisted in this advisory function by a small team in the Office of the Clerk. I observed that in the course of a year, but particularly over the returns processing period, my staff and I are in regular, even daily, contact with members right across the House. My office had no record of ever having been contacted by Mr Wood with a request for substantive advice over his return.
- [33] I enquired whether Mr Wood had ever read Appendix B. He said, "I can't recall that I've done that, but don't think so". He told me that, in his view, when he was preparing returns and declaring trusts, he was doing so correctly.
- [34] "Had he ever read the Explanatory Notes?" I asked. Mr Wood said that, over the five or six years he had been making returns, he "wasn't sure".
- [35] Why, I continued, when you became a Minister and were discussing pecuniary interests with the Cabinet Office, did it not occur to you to update your previous returns to the Register?
- [36] "They were compartmentalised as different processes" he responded, and "I didn't think about the Register of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests". "I didn't consider it".
- [37] I then read an extract from the 2008 Privileges Committee report to Mr Wood which stated
- "It is appropriate to expect members to make an honest attempt to return all of the pecuniary interests that they hold. In order to make such an honest attempt, members are obliged to turn their minds to the interests that they have. The onus is on members to recognise and declare relevant interests".²
- [38] I noted that the Privileges Committee report has been referenced in each issue of the Explanatory Notes since 2008.

² See Question of privilege relating to compliance with a member's obligations under the Standing Orders dealing with pecuniary interests, page 15.

- [39] I also read out to him the declaration that Mr Wood had signed on his first, paper-based return of interests, which stated that:

I certify that the completed forms attached contain, to the best of my knowledge, a complete list of those interests and assets as at 31 January 2017, and those transactions during the period ending 31 January 2017, that I am required to register pursuant to Appendix B of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives.

I understand that a copy of this return will be provided to the Controller and Auditor-General and will be summarised for publication.

Signed 14/2/2017

- [40] Mr Wood confirmed to me that he had signed the declaration—we now know the return was not complete. Similarly, he had initialled pages of the returns submitted in later years that had incorrect declarations. For example, in the shares declarations in 2019, Mr Wood had initialled the return to say no shares were held, when in fact he did own shares.
- [41] I asked whether or not it had ever occurred to Mr Wood that he held shares which needed to be declared, given that—presumably—over that early period as a member of Parliament he had been receiving dividends regularly, along with notifications from his broker. He responded that the dividends went straight into his bank account. He “didn’t pay much attention to it”. He “accepted it was a failing” not to declare the shares, which was why he declared his AIA and Contact Energy Limited shares in 2022.
- [42] I asked Mr Wood whether, when he was discussing his shares with the Cabinet Office in November 2020, after becoming a Minister, he had thought about the need to notify amendments to correct errors or omissions about his shareholdings in his previous Parliamentary returns—as required by Standing Orders. No, he said, “that did not occur to me”.
- [43] I also enquired why it was that, in 2021, Mr Wood was one of a very small number of members who did not submit their returns in accordance with the timetable set out clearly in Standing Orders. He was late. That too was an “oversight. An error”.
- [44] Noting the revelation in the House by the Prime Minister on 7 June that Mr Wood had had discussions about his conflicts of interest with the Cabinet Office on twelve occasions between November 2020 and March 2023, I asked why it was only in January 2022—more than five years after he became a Member of Parliament—that he had moved to declare his AIA and Contact Energy Limited shareholdings. He said he had been operating under the mistaken belief that the shares had been sold—and then discovered they had not been. He then moved to declare them.
- [45] I then enquired about the JM Fairey Family Trust. Who were the trustees? Mr Wood replied that the trust had been established by his wife’s grandfather, and that, together with his wife, he was a trustee, along with a lawyer. Who made the decisions, I enquired. Mr Wood told me he was “not very engaged in it, as matters were generally handled by his lawyer”. The JM Fairey Family Trust handled assets that had previously been managed by the Public Trust. In recent times, the JM Fairey Family Trust had

sought to move investments into other financial instruments, such as unit trusts. This process was ongoing.

- [46] What was the *modus operandi* of the JM Fairey Family Trust, I asked. Mr Wood said matters were largely in the hands of his lawyer, and he “leaves as much as possible to him”. He had also given general instructions in 2019/2020 to the investment adviser that he wanted to divest shares and move to other instruments.
- [47] I also asked the member whether he had ever had discussions with other members of Parliament, or his party whips, about pecuniary interests. “Yes”, he said, “at various points, but I was not seeking advice”.
- [48] I then asked if Mr Wood was aware that it was his responsibility as a member of Parliament to undertake the returns process obligations as set out in Appendix B. He confirmed that he was aware of that responsibility “all the way through”. If so, I responded, has this situation developed because of a succession of “oversights”. “Yes,” said the member. He saw a distinction between these oversights about shares, and the need to declare shares held in a trust.
- [49] I then asked whether, prior to recent events, he had been aware of the pecuniary interests inquiry process, and that one of the possible outcomes was being referred to the Privileges Committee. “Not specifically,” was his reply but he told me he had become more aware recently. Mr Wood did not seem to be familiar with the purpose of the register—namely “to record members’ interests, thereby providing transparency and strengthening public trust and confidence in parliamentary processes and decision making”.
- [50] Turning to the Michael Wood Family Trust, which had been declared in the Register up until 2020, I enquired why that was no longer listed. Mr Wood explained that that was a trust that had assisted in the purchase of the family home, along with the JM Fairey Family Trust. It had been wound up. I invited Mr Wood to clarify the relationship between the two trusts and his family home, and to amend previous returns as required.
- [51] Noting that his pecuniary interests had been the focus of intense media scrutiny and comment, I then showed Mr Wood a video clip of an interview he gave on 8 June 2023, the day the inquiry was announced. Apart from expressing the hope that “clarity and transparency” would emerge from the inquiry, Mr Wood had stated that “I have also followed up and corrected the Register of Pecuniary Interests going back to 2017”. I put it to Mr Wood that that statement was not correct, as there had been no amendments made at all to his previous returns, for the entire period since February 2017. What did he mean by that comment to the media? He replied that he “must have misspoken in the heat of the press scrum”. He thought he might have mixed up the Standing Orders and Cabinet Office requirements.
- [52] I had no further questions, so asked Mr Wood if he wished to make any closing comments. He said he took full responsibility for what had happened and that it was important not to cast blame on staff members. I said my sense was that he had indeed breached the Standing Orders and the privilege of the House by not completing his returns as he should have, but I would have to reflect on that.

- [53] Mr Wood responded by saying that "other members too made mistakes". I agreed but said that other members had proved to be much quicker in seeking advice from me as the Registrar if they were uncertain about a matter and in notifying their errors and omissions, as they were required to do.
- [54] Mr Wood said he would complete his corrections as soon as possible. He had nothing further to say. He had "fallen short". But he had no malice underlying his actions and they were not deliberate.
- [55] The meeting closed.

Correspondence with Mr Wood about amending his previous returns

- [56] I wish to make clear to the House that, quite separately from the inquiry process, Mr Wood did initiate an exchange of correspondence with me about amending his previous returns. His first letter was sent to me on 6 June in which he sought advice on how he could amend previous returns, in relation to his Auckland International Airport Limited and Contact Energy Limited shares. I replied to him on the same day advising him that clause 20 of Appendix B sets out the process for correcting errors and omissions.
- [57] On 8 June, Mr Wood sent me another letter indicating that his returns for the years 2017–2021 needed to be amended. I replied by letter on the same day requesting that he provide the detailed requirements of any proposed amendments.
- [58] On 22 June, in response to my letter of 8 June inviting him to propose amendments to his earlier returns, Mr Wood forwarded a document setting out proposed changes to the Register 2017–2023. He specifically enquired whether he was required to declare any interest that was held in a trust of which he is a trustee and beneficiary, in particular shares.
- [59] I responded on 23 June with advice about interests held in trust and drew attention to the Privileges Committee's report in 2008 dealing with arrangements with third parties or trusts.³ Mr Wood's proposed amendments to his returns were finalised on 3 July and published on the Parliament website.

Concluding observations

A matter that may warrant the further attention of the House

- [60] Clause 16 of Appendix B of the Standing Orders states that

16(8) The Registrar may,—

[...]

- (d) report to the House on any other matter that may warrant the further attention of the House.

- [61] I wish to bring a matter to the attention of the House. I also intend to raise the matter with the Standing Orders Committee because I consider that aspects of Appendix B

³ Question of privilege relating to compliance with a member's obligations under the Standing Orders dealing with pecuniary interests.

may need to be revised. My particular concern is whether Appendix B is clear that members must, under certain circumstances, declare shareholdings held in trust.

- [62] Mr Wood's responses to my questions about his involvement as a trustee in the governance of the J M Fairey Family Trust indicated that much of the management of the Trust was handled by the third trustee. The third trustee is a lawyer and Mr Wood said that matters "were largely in the hands of his lawyer, and he leaves as much as possible to him". Mr Wood himself, he told me, was "not very engaged in it".
- [63] The responsibilities of trustees are set out very clearly in the Trusts Act 2019. Trustees are accountable for the way they carry out their legal duties. They have to know the terms of the trust and are unable—except for short periods and where the delegation is necessary—to delegate their powers. Trusts are required to file an IR6 tax return each year, which would be expected to involve engagement with IRD. Any trust income would be separated into beneficiary income and trustee income.
- [64] In these circumstances, I would assume that Mr Wood knew of the existence of the J M Fairey Family Trust's shareholdings, and any related income. He had responsibilities and would have been involved in any decision-making.
- [65] Finally, it seems to me that the Inquiry has shown how real the concerns were, and are, that were expressed by the Privileges Committee in its report of 2008. That report made clear that "all distinct interests must be declared, regardless of whether they are channelled through a trust or third party."⁴

"It is appropriate to expect members to make an honest attempt to return all of the pecuniary interests that they hold. In order to make such an honest attempt, members are obliged to turn their minds to the interests that they have. The onus is on members to recognise and declare relevant interests".⁵

A question of privilege

- [66] Clause 16 of Appendix B of the Standing Orders states that

16(8) The Registrar may,—

[...]

- (c) determine that the matter under inquiry involves a question of privilege, and report this to the House at the first opportunity

- [67] I have determined that this matter involves a question of privilege. It is for the Privileges Committee to determine if the member, the Hon Michael Wood, has committed a contempt, in respect of his actions and inactions in relation to his obligations under Appendix B of Standing Orders.
- [68] The relevant Standing Orders relating to contempt, are:

⁴ See Question of privilege relating to compliance with a member's obligations under the Standing Orders dealing with pecuniary interests, page 20.

⁵ See Question of privilege relating to compliance with a member's obligations under the Standing Orders dealing with pecuniary interests, page 15.

418 (g) as a member, knowingly failing to make a return of pecuniary and other specified interests by the due date

418 (h) as a member, knowingly providing false or misleading information in a return of return of pecuniary and other specified interests

[69] I would like to bring the following matters to the Privileges Committee's attention.

[70] The Inquiry revealed that the member had a lack of engagement with the pecuniary interests process over several years, and that he demonstrated an incomplete execution of his responsibilities to declare his pecuniary and other specified interests.

[71] I was surprised, and concerned, that Mr Wood was unable to say whether he had read the material that members are supplied with annually to assist them to understand the obligations they have in relation to declaring their pecuniary and other specified interests. The member was also unable to confirm whether he had ever read Appendix B of the Standing Orders, which explains the principles and requirements of the Register. It is difficult, therefore, to see how the member could have expected to fulfil the requirements he had.

[72] Before this matter arose, Mr Wood had never sought specific advice from me over his responsibilities under Appendix B. As Registrar, I am always available to assist members. Many members routinely approach me to discuss preparation of their annual returns or on other occasions throughout the year. It is clear however that it is up to members to initiate contact with me if they have concerns or want advice. Standing Orders, and Parliament itself, rely on members taking their responsibilities seriously.

[73] Mr Wood also demonstrated a worrying and ongoing lack of awareness of the need to correct errors and omissions in his pecuniary interest returns and that the corrections should be notified in a timely manner. Members who become aware of an error or omission in a previous return "must advise the Registrar of that error or omission as soon as practicable after becoming aware of it" (Standing Orders, Appendix B, clause 20(1)). Mr Wood was very tardy in correcting his prior returns; his amendments to his previous returns were eventually finalised and published on 3 July 2023. The opportunity to correct previous returns is always available. It is disappointing that it has taken this much time, and this Inquiry, for the member to correct his previous returns.

[74] I note also that Mr Wood also did not submit his 2021 return within the required time frame.

[75] The Inquiry reveals, to my mind, that Mr Wood did not turn his mind to his interests as he should have. In so doing, he has damaged his own standing as a member and has also cast a shadow over the entire Register, and the trust and confidence that the public are entitled to expect they can have in their elected representatives.

Sir Maarten Wevers KNZM

Registrar of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests of Members of Parliament