

Noting the significant events affecting the public and retailers over the month of November 2018, the Minister for Home Affairs' office asked the Department of Home Affairs to consider this proposal. He also asked the Department of Finance to cost it to ensure it was suitable and it was value for money. The proposal was subsequently assessed and recommended to be funded as it represented value for money and a proper use of Commonwealth resources, consistent with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Keneally, a supplementary question?

**Senator KENEALLY** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:13): I thank the minister for that answer. Documents released under freedom of information show that on 28 September 2018, almost two months before the Bourke Street attack, Minister Dutton directed his department to consider a proposal for a grant to the National Retail Association for protecting public spaces. How could the minister request his department to consider a grant in response to a terrorist attack that had not yet occurred?

**Senator REYNOLDS** (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:13): Senator Keneally, I think you have completely misunderstood, so I'll go back over the answer I have just given.

*Opposition senators interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Order!

**Senator REYNOLDS:** This is all about the politics of this issue, and this is really not a grant or a grant program to take that out. So, again, this grant was for the type of these activities. The National Retail Association, who represents businesses like those who were impacted by that terrible attack, were seeking crowded place protection. That is exactly at the heart of what this grant was all about.

*Senator Keneally interjecting—*

*Senator Watt interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Watt and Senator Keneally.

**Senator Scarr:** Senator O'Neill would have got that right!

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Scarr! Senator Keneally, a final supplementary question?

**Senator KENEALLY** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:14): Public documents reveal the minister received a direct political donation from the National Retail Association a week before he asked his department to fast track a nearly \$1 million grant. The Bourke Street terrorist attack was a national tragedy. It saw one victim lose his life and two stabbing victims seriously injured. Is the minister really using this tragedy the cover up his conflict of interest?

**Senator REYNOLDS** (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:14): There is only one side of politics in this chamber that is playing politics with this issue. It was very clear that this was funding for protecting crowded places, which is exactly what Senator Keneally said.

*Senator Keneally interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Keneally.

**Senator REYNOLDS:** It was vetted by Finance. It was vetted by Home Affairs. This was to protect retailers from terrorist attacks. It is that simple. There is only one side that is playing politics with that, and that is that side of the chamber.

*Senator Keneally interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

*Senator Keneally interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Keneally, while I'm talking, please. I'm going to ask people to respect my request, when they are called by name, to at least count to 10 slowly before they start breaching standing orders again.

**From:** s 22  
**To:** s 22  
**Subject:** FW: Media Report - Minister Dutton / Safer Communities [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Thursday, 11 February 2021 1:58:28 PM

## OFFICIAL

s 22

This is the latest ABC [article](#) on Minister Dutton's involvement in handing out grants under the SCF.

This article, and part of the focus of 7.30 last night, was about Minister Dutton's one-off grant to the National Retail Association (NRA). Minister Dutton requested NRA's grant proposal be considered sooner, after he attended an NRA event, and NRA gave a donation to the Queensland LNP in November 2018. The Minister approved the funding grant in March 2019, following advice from Home Affairs which said the grant "represents value for money and a proper use of Commonwealth resources".

The CEO of the NRA said the grant proposal was not discussed at the event.

There is minor reference to PM&C in this article in relation to Ministerial Standards: *'Prime Minister Scott Morrison can seek advice from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) for guidance on whether there has been a breach of ministerial standards.'*

Media attention appears limited to ABC and the Guardian at this stage.

Thanks

s 22

| Adviser

Border Security and Law Enforcement Policy | Homeland Security Branch

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*The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to their Cultures, Country and Elders both past and present.*

**From:** s 22

**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 February 2021 9:16 AM

**To:** Burke, Michael

**Cc:** NSD - Border Security & Law Enforcement Policy

**Subject:** Media Report - Minister Dutton / Safer Communities [SEC=OFFICIAL]

## OFFICIAL

Good morning Michael

The ABC (7.30) has [reported](#) this morning that Minister Dutton 'personally slashed millions in grant funding' from the Round 3 Safer Communities Funding (SCF) program, and used these funds to 'support his own handpicked list that did not follow his department's recommendations'.

The ABC reports that on January 31, 2019, the Minister 'reduced funding for 19 of the highest-scoring grant applications, in a handwritten note, by a combined total of \$5.59 million'. A 'reserve list' of funding options was created by Home Affairs and provided to the Minister, with projects ranked from highest to lowest. The Minister reportedly declined to follow the merit-based recommendations, which he is permitted to do under the grant rules, and handwrote his own rankings of the grant applications. On 31 January 2019, a Home Affairs ministerial briefing noted '[t]he applications do not represent value for money in accordance with the grant guidelines.'

7.30 has stated it is not suggesting that these projects approved by the Minister were not eligible

for funding, but rather that some more highly valued projects assessed on merit were overlooked.

Minister Dutton has responded to the ABC with the following statement:

"The suggestion that the Government has done anything other than support projects worthy of support is nonsense.

I am proud of the support the Safer Communities Fund has provided to organisations such as The Scout Association, Salvation Army Trust and St Vincent de Paul who have made Australia a safer place.

Australians expect the Government to act to make the communities we live in safer. That is exactly what the Government has done through the Safer Communities Fund."

The ABC article has been published ahead of the 7.30 Report tonight on the same topic. This is gaining some coverage on twitter, but has not (yet) been picked up by other media.

We'll reach out to Home Affairs to see if they have talking points they are willing to share at this point.

Happy to discuss.

Kind regards

s 22 | Adviser

Border Security and Law Enforcement Policy | Homeland Security Branch

National Security Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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10/02/2021 09:48:38 PM

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Peter Dutton

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton's \$880,000 grant to the National Retail Association eight days after it made a \$1,500 political donation to the Queensland Liberal National Party reeks.

A leader holds those he leads accountable. But repeatedly you have let your ministers use taxpayer's money for their own political gain.

I am ashamed of this behaviour; Australians expect much more.

11/02/2021 06:07:46 AM

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Rorting of public funds

PM

Don't think you understand how angry the public are about pork barreling of tax payer money

Peter Dutton is just the latest in the long list that started when your government fudged sports grants while in care taker mode

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-10/peter-dutton-cut-funding-safety-projects-selected-his-own-list/13126834>

Where is the probity and decency that is supposed to come with public office?

Grants, public money, should be allocated based on greatest need

Regards

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11/02/2021 06:18:31 PM

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Scott.

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Your party also has a moral and ethics issue. Dutton giving away \$880,000 grants for a \$1500 donation to the Qld LNP? That is sickening. My trust in the Liberals is at an all time low.

regards

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12/02/2021 03:51:20 PM

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Media: Prime Minister Scott Morrison has defended Home Affairs Peter Dutton against accusations of pork-barrelling, as the cabinet minister says his changes gave the commonwealth more bang for its buck. Mr Dutton handpicked 53 projects to share in \$8.5 million for security cameras and safety lighting in the months before the last federal election, only five of which were in safe Labor seats.

Prime Minister, this is not good enough. s 22

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