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Member for Bulimba Di Farmer exceeds allowance for office expenses



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Letter mail-outs to residents are responsible for a Brisbane MP blowing-out her electorate office allowance.

Labor member for Bulimba Di Farmer spent \$82,307.70 through her electorate and communication allowance in the past financial year, which was higher than any other Queensland MP.



Member for Bulimba Di Farmer exceeded her electorate allowance for 2015-16. GLENN CAMPBELL

Of that amount, \$43,850.34 was for production, publication and distribution services.

The office expenditure for most MPs lingered around the \$60,000 mark in 2015-16.

The results are detailed in the *Annual Report of Electorate and Communication Allowance Expenditure* for July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016.

The rules show that when an MP overspends their allowance, any over-expenditure cost is met personally by the member.

Ms Farmer's allowance was \$62,250.

"It's a choice, I paid those bills," Ms Farmer said.

Ms Farmer said there were a range of ways to communicate with residents, such as email or social media, but that relied on having contact details.

She said distributors could take two weeks to get information into letterboxes and volunteers could be used when available.

But using the more expensive route - Australia Post - was necessary for issues that were more time sensitive.

"I had a couple of local issues this year which... I needed to get information out to people quickly on them and the only way I could choose to do that was via Australia Post, so that just racks up the bill unfortunately," she said.

Ms Farmer could not immediately recall the specific issues relating to the mail-outs in the past financial year when questioned on Friday afternoon.

Ms Farmer said an Australia Post mail-out also had the benefit of servicing a wider geographic area or for example writing to over-65s about a senior's morning tea, and that the letters were personally-addressed.

Opposition Leader Tim Nicholls' electorate office expenses were \$60,407.17 for the past year and Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk's were \$66,306.08.

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