

# CPA Australia resorts to identifying 'friendlies' and 'managing' members



Graeme Wade fielded a letter from senior CPA members requesting that their queries about marketing spend be tabled at last year's AGM. They weren't.



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An email from CPA Australia chief operating officer **Jeff Hughes** to his team, asking for their help identifying "friendlies" within their divisions to help "manage" CPA's unfolding membership revolt, has caused anger among the accountancy body's most senior members.

In a missive to dated March 16, Hughes distributes the executive body's official response to what he euphemistically refers to "a number of misinformed commentaries that have been circulating". That would be all

the stories published in this column and elsewhere in this august organ, most notably by our esteemed colleague, **Edmund Tadros**.

Most interestingly, in the foreword (which appears not to have been deleted before distribution), Hughes instructs his staff to identify "friendlies" and appears to indicate a rump of key influencers within the membership are being actively "managed" as head office fights to stave off a simmering revolt from its members over transparency of executive pay, the large amounts of money being spent on marketing (specifically to promote CEO **Alex Malley's** TV show and book) and the decision to stage the organisation's upcoming AGM in Singapore – preventing the vast majority of its membership from attending.

"Dear Team," the email reads. "Can I please ask that you send the below to each of your councillor members as soon as you can along with the attachment. It is very important that we keep to the below protocol. I ask you to familiarise yourself with this document as we believe that it answers that mistruths out there in the market. For those of you who have been 'managing' members ... by all means send this document to them and any others who you consider friendlies but need some reassurance. Forward it wisely. For information we will be sending this to those members who [CPA president] **Graeme [Wade]** has made contact with after they had emailed or called. Happy to discuss anything with you if you require clarification. Thanks team – much appreciated. Jeff."

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**From:** Jeff Hughes  
**Sent:** Thursday, 16 March 2017 12:08 PM  
**To:** Rick Jones; Gina Gunn; Jon Aloni; Matthew Andrews; Glenn Ahern; Richard Chapman; Langdon Blight; Michael Harris; Melvin Yong; Priya Terumalay; Deborah Leung; Colleen Schooling  
**Cc:** Nicole O'Connell; Colleen Connor  
**Subject:** Important Information for Divisional Councillors

Dear Team,

Can I please ask that you send the below to each of your councillor members as soon as you can along with the attachment. It is very important that we keep to the below protocol. I ask you to familiarise yourself with this document as we believe that it answers that mistruths out there in the market. For those of you who have been "managing" members e.g. Langdon Michael Evans, Gina Raymond White, Richard Mel Georgiou by all means send this document to them and any others who you consider friendlies but need some reassurance. Forward it wisely. For information we will be sending this to those members who Graeme has made contact with after they had emailed or called. Happy to discuss anything with you if you require clarification.

Thanks team – much appreciated.

Jeff

Dear Divisional Councillor,

In concert with a number of actions that we will be taking, please find attached our response to a number of misinformed commentaries that have been circulating recently.

If you have any questions in relation to this document please do not hesitate to contact me directly on [jeff.hughes@cpaaustralia.com.au](mailto:jeff.hughes@cpaaustralia.com.au). In the event that a member approaches you concerning these commentaries, please direct them to me I will send them through a copy of the attached document.

Due to the various actions that we will be taking, it is important that the above protocol is followed. I thank you for your cooperation.

Kind Regards

Jeff Hughes | Chief Operating Officer | Member Services  
CPA Australia

CPA Australia chief operating officer Jeff Hughes email to staff. **Supplied**

The uncovering of the email comes as CPA Australia's most senior members, many of them former office-holders with the organisation, are still smarting from having concerns raised last year about Malley dismissed out of hand by the CPA executive.

Calling themselves the Feather Dusters and comprising former CPA board members and high-ranking state officials, the informal grouping sent a letter to Wade last April, requesting that issues raised within it be tabled at last year's AGM.

"Our most recent concern in respect to CPA Australia is the significant share of members' funds that is spent annually in promoting the CPA brand, whether this is the best use of funds to deliver tangible benefits to members and the profession and the wisdom of promoting an individual rather than CPA as an institution," the Feather Dusters' letter reads.

"Apart from being unaware of benefits, there is to us a concern that CPA is seeking to present Alex as a cult figure and the public persona of CPA. His face is on trams and billboards and the link to CPA Australia (who we are, what do we do) is both unclear and very tenuous."

One of the Feather Dusters received a reply from Wade acknowledging receipt of the letter, but it was never tabled at the 2016 AGM.

"Managing" members and identifying "friendlies"? All sounds perfectly kosher to us ...