Hints for developing policies for prioritising resources and workload for political finance oversight institutions

As an oversight institution with finite resources, you may find your workload exceeds your capacity in a variety of areas. There may be greater demand for training programmes than you can deliver, or, if you engage in election campaign monitoring, you may need to decide which parties or which campaign activities to monitor. The same may be true for your investigative/enforcement caseload.

Without an established policy about how to prioritise cases, you may fall into the trap of only handling the cases that can be processes very quickly. Although this may yield impressive statistics for the *number* of cases handled, it does not mean that you are handling cases that will have an impact on the integrity of the political finance regime.

The US Federal Election Commission implemented an Enforcement Prioritisation System to guide the agency in how it manages complaints. The system, which sustained a court challenge, accesses cases according to a number of factors including the:

- seriousness of the alleged violation

- nature of the alleged violation

- complexity of an investigation into the alleged violation

- amount of money involved in/scale of the alleged violation

- potential impact on the election

- past instances of violations

- the running of any statute of limitations

In designing a prioritisation system, it should provide for a balance of types of cases to be handled. If only the most complex and serious cases are prioritised, it leaves the door open to more mundane areas of the law going unenforced. And, staff may be able to progress a mixed caseload more efficiently than a caseload consisting only of large, complicated matters.