



Supplementary questions: Mr Simon Holmes à Court and Climate 200

- 1) Climate 200's website highlights the role the organisation has played in the federal electoral process (About Climate 200), which is repeated in the donation solicitation page. Although Climate 200 has also played a role in the last NSW election, this fact is not mentioned. Please explain:

- How and when was this decision to re-allocate Climate 200 donors' funds made and who made it?
- When and how was this decision conveyed to Climate 200 donors?

Climate 200's dominant purpose is to support federal independent campaigns, however we have at times chosen to support a number of state independent campaigns, including in NSW.

In accordance with the NSW Electoral Act, Climate 200 established a specific NSW election campaign account. Climate 200 ran a distinct fundraising campaign into this account, which in turn was used to finance NSW election related activities.

Climate 200 is now focussed on the next federal election.

- 2) You are Convenor of and a prolific online contributor on behalf of Climate 200 and its political objectives. Have you ever written or otherwise contributed to the online share market trading forum Hot Copper, under your own name or an alias, in relation to campaigns, issues or candidates supported by Climate 200? If you have used an alias or aliases, what is the name or names?

No, never.

- 3) In relation to the election campaigns fund, Mr Geoffrey Watson, Centre for Public Integrity, has previously stated that:

The rationale for the payments is to enhance democratic processes by encouraging wider participation, protecting potential candidates from the burden of necessary costs associated with the nomination process, and to assist in complying with the demands of a campaign. The payments are an important component in redressing some of the incumbency advantage – it might not be entirely successful in that respect, but it can be monitored and redesigned better to achieve that. I also note the scheme is designed in a way so that it does not encourage patently frivolous nominations.

Do you agree with that statement and why. If not, why not?

The question asked of Mr Watson was not provided, but it appears he was asked whether public funding should be extended to **third party campaigns**. We would agree that there is no need or reason to do so.

Without context, it is hard to understand the argument that public funding redresses some of the incumbency advantages, however we do agree with Mr Watson that the effect of public funding should be monitored and redesigned where deficiencies are identified.



In relation to public funding of **political candidates**, one deficiency is that while parties receive 75% of their funding in advance of the election, incumbent independents re-contesting their seats do not.

NSW's public funding provides immense benefit to incumbent parties. For the Labor Party and Coalition, funding from the Election Campaigns Fund is sufficient to fund effectively their entire election campaigns.

New entrants do not receive any public funding.

While Climate 200 is **not** arguing for public funding of new entrants, we believe the system should be modified to provide a more level playing field. This could be achieved in many ways, such as reflecting the benefits of incumbency in the donation restrictions. We recommend an independent review of NSW's campaign financing rules to properly consider the fairness of the scheme and recommend reforms to ensure a more level playing field for the diversity of political participants who wish to contest elections.

- 4) Do you believe that restricting, or curtailing, the campaign activities or expenditure of like-minded third party campaigners, who reflect a groundswell of support on a particular issue, could potentially entrench incumbency advantages of political parties?

The rules which apply to third party campaigners should reflect the general principles for which Climate 200 advocates in electoral laws:

- fairness
- integrity
- transparency
- the establishment of a level playing field for diverse political participants.

Appropriately drafted, such laws should foster participation and reduce the ability of a third party/parties of particular political alignment to overwhelm the debate.

