

**Submission
No 32**

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2023 NSW STATE ELECTION AND OTHER
MATTERS**

Organisation: Climate 200

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Electoral Matters Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

To the Committee

Please find attached Climate 200's submission to the inquiry into the conduct of the 2023 New South Wales state election.

Climate 200 would welcome the opportunity to appear at a public hearing to present evidence and answer questions in person.

Kind regards

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Submission on the conduct of the 2023 NSW state election

Introduction

Climate 200 thanks the Electoral Matters Committee for the opportunity to provide feedback on its experience in the March 2023 New South Wales (NSW) state election.

Climate 200 is a crowdfunded organisation that supports independent community campaigns — specifically, those committed to science-based climate action and best practice integrity and gender equity policies — to run competitive election campaigns.

Climate 200 supported six independent candidates in the 2023 NSW election as a third party campaigner. Two of those candidates were successful: Alex Greenwich was re-elected as the member for Sydney and Judy Hannan was elected in the seat of Wollondilly.

In robust democracies, electoral laws should promote fairness, transparency and participation in the electoral process. Adhering to these principles is vital to maintaining public confidence in the integrity of the electoral system and in democracy. Participation encompasses the ability of candidates standing for election to compete on a level playing field, regardless of their political affiliation or, indeed, independence from political affiliation.

Climate 200 contends that a number of features of NSW's electoral funding rules *undermine* fairness and participation by disproportionately favouring incumbents and making it much more difficult for independents to run competitive campaigns. Public funding of incumbents, and the design of NSW's donation and expenditure caps, create an unlevel playing field between incumbents and challengers and between major party candidates and independents. The donations cap disproportionately impacts independent challengers. The expenditure cap allows the major parties to outspend independent campaigns by multiple factors.

It is worth noting the impacts on independents of recent legislative changes in other jurisdictions which have increased public funding for incumbents and capped donations and expenditure. At the 2022 Victorian state election, the first since the introduction of a donation cap which provides special treatment for the major parties, the two independents in the lower house who contested the election lost their seats, and no new independents were elected. After Queensland introduced donation and expenditure caps ahead of the 2020 election, no new independents were elected.

While the NSW Legislative Assembly currently includes nine independents, nearly all of these individuals benefited from incumbency advantage of some kind. They were either elected as party members and subsequently defected, or were former mayors. Alex Greenwich was the chosen successor of Clover Moore. The one exception is Joe McGirr, who won his third tilt at Wagga Wagga in a by-election triggered by the departure of controversial Liberal MP, Daryl McGuire.¹

This submission will provide Climate 200's insights into the \$300 million head start enjoyed by the major parties in NSW elections and the barriers to entry and other challenges faced by independent campaigns. We will also address our support for truth in political advertising laws and to restore mandatory preferential voting in NSW.

Natural advantages for major parties and incumbents

Major party candidates have a range of inherent advantages over independent challengers. Major party candidates are backed by well-funded, well-oiled, national machines. They benefit from economies of scale and party infrastructure, with centralised communications, staffing, templates, compliance and volunteer management.

Having enjoyed a high-profile existence for many decades, the parties enjoy well-established and far-reaching brand recognition, and benefit from voter habits.

Major party candidates also benefit from their parties' funding promises made during elections. Whether they are considered to be pork-barrelling or simply standard electioneering practice,² such promises influence voters.

Incumbent parliamentarians enjoy inherent advantages, receiving significant exposure to voters and the media in the course of performing their role.

Independent challengers and new/small parties must work very hard and invest significantly in advertising to achieve the necessary brand recognition and media attention to come close to competing with the natural advantages enjoyed by the major parties and incumbents.

Major party candidates' publicly funded head start

In addition to these natural advantages, the major parties receive very significant publicly funded benefits through their incumbent parliamentarians, which independent challengers do not.

Over the four years of the last NSW election cycle, these publicly funded entitlements collectively delivered nearly \$300 million to the NSW Labor Party and the Coalition (see appendix):

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-09/antony-green-calls-by-election-for-joe-mcgirr/10219584>

² See for example:

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/nsw-labor-accused-of-pork-barrelling-after-school-p-and-c-offered-20-000-20230314-p5cs09.html>

Election Campaigns Fund	\$26.5m
Administrative Funding	\$35.0m
Communications Allowance	\$35.3m
Salaries and other allowances	\$201.5m
Total	\$298.3m

Election Campaigns Fund

In NSW, candidates are eligible for public funding from the Election Campaigns Fund if they receive four per cent or more of first preference votes. For the major parties, the current amount per vote is \$5.30 for lower house candidates and \$3.98 for upper house candidates.³ The public funding received by major party lower and upper house candidates is consolidated into party funds.

A registered party that received a payment from the fund for the previous state election is entitled to receive 75 per cent of their Election Campaigns Funding *prior to* the next state election.

The Election Campaigns Funding received by the major parties in connection with the 2023 election is set out below:

	Advance payments for 2023 election	Post election payments	Total received for 2023 election
Labor	\$5.9m	\$8.1m	\$14.0m
Coalition	\$9.9m	\$2.6m	\$12.5m
Total			\$26.5m

The Election Campaigns Fund is a boon for the major parties. It completely removes their need to fundraise. In fact, the major parties collected *more* from the fund for the 2023 election than they were even permitted to spend on a statewide basis during the capped expenditure period (see below: the statewide cap applicable to the major parties was \$12.3 million).

³<https://elections.nsw.gov.au/funding-and-disclosure/public-funding/election-campaigns-fund/amounts-payable-for-parties>
The amounts payable to eligible parties and candidates is the lesser amount of the funding per vote the candidate or party is eligible for; or the total amount of the actual campaign expenditure incurred by the candidate or party. Actual campaign expenditure is electoral expenditure incurred in connection with a state election that is within a party or candidate's expenditure cap and, with respect to state elections, is incurred between 1 July in the year before the election, to the end of election day.

Independents, on the other hand, are not entitled to advance election funding from the Fund, not even incumbents or re-contesting candidates. And independents who contested the previous election but do not wish to contest again are not allowed to pass on their public funding to another independent candidate in their electorate.

Independent challengers rely entirely on donations. They cannot predict how many votes they will receive or whether they will cross the four per cent threshold, so they cannot borrow money on the expectation of repaying the loan with Election Campaigns Funding.

Administrative Funding

Parties and elected independents are entitled to quarterly payments of administrative funding that may be used for a broad range of expenditure:

- administration or management of the activities of the party or member
- expenditure for conferences, seminars, meetings or similar functions
- providing information to the public about the party or member
- providing information to members and supporters of the party or member
- costs related to auditing returns and statements of financial accounts
- equipment and training
- staff remuneration
- vehicles
- office accommodation
- interest payments on loans.⁴

Independent challengers receive no public funding for these expenses. They rely on donations to pay for them.

For parties, administrative funding is centralised and is based on the number of party members elected.

In the four years leading up to the 2023 election, Labor received approximately \$14 million⁵ and the Coalition \$21 million in administrative funding (see Appendix).

Notably, this funding is on top of the Communications Allowances and Electoral Allowances for each parliamentarian.

Communications Allowances

The Communications Allowance is provided to elected members to meet the costs associated with communicating with their constituents. Legislative Assembly members are entitled to an annual base allowance of \$20,850 plus \$1.54 per elector (\$83,728 to \$97,176) and Legislative Council members receive \$5,315 per annum⁶. When the allowance is exhausted, any additional costs may be met from unexpended funds from the member's General Travel Allowance or from the member's Electoral

⁴ <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/funding-and-disclosure/public-funding/administration-fund>

⁵ Includes amounts received by the Country Labor Party, before it was deregistered in 2021.

⁶ NSW Parliamentary Tribunal - Annual Determination 2023

Allowance. Although the Communications Allowance cannot be used in the 'blackout period' two months out from the election, it can be used throughout most of the electoral cycle for targeted promotional materials.

Over the four years of the last NSW election cycle, NSW Coalition members collectively received approximately \$19.9 million in Communications Allowances, and NSW Labor members received approximately \$15.3 million (see Appendix).

Independent challengers do not receive any public funding for communications, relying entirely on donations to promote their policies and credentials.

Salaries and other allowances

Elected members also receive publicly funded salaries, staff and a range of allowances in addition to those mentioned above.⁷

Elected member base salary	\$172,576 <i>Members with additional responsibilities receive higher salaries</i>
Electoral office staff wages	3-4 staff for LA members 1-2 staff for LC members Paid between \$73,182 and \$99,432 per annum.
Electoral allowances	\$57,810 to \$162,445 per year for LA members, plus \$17,445 to \$33,635 depending on location. \$67,705 per year for LC members, plus \$18,375 to \$23,935 depending on location.
Travel allowance	\$7,085 to \$112,775 for LA members. \$7,085 to \$17,715 for LC members.

Over the four years of the last NSW election cycle, it is estimated that NSW Coalition members collectively received *a minimum* of over \$114.2 million in salaries and allowances, and NSW Labor

⁷ Parliament of NSW (2022). Salaries and allowances for members: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/salaries-and-allowances-for-members-of-the-legislative-assembly.aspx>; <https://www.remtribunals.nsw.gov.au/parliamentary/current-prt-determinations>

members received over \$87.3 million (see Appendix). This is a very conservative estimate, based on their *minimum* entitlements of travel, wages and electoral allowances.

An independent challenger does not get paid to run for office. To run an effective campaign, they have to take time off paid work, which few can afford. Their support team is not publicly funded. Their travel costs are not publicly funded. All of these costs must be paid for through donations.

Electoral roll access

Incumbents have access to the electoral roll throughout the political cycle.

Independent challengers do not enjoy this benefit. If they wish to run data-driven campaigns matching the incumbents, they must purchase data products equivalent to the roll. These cost approximately \$25,000 for a single state electorate.

Publicly funded party candidates vs capped independent candidates

Independent challengers are disproportionately impacted by NSW's donations cap. In order to climb over the \$300 million 'wall' of the above mentioned incumbency benefits, independent challengers need to invest a significant amount of time and energy fundraising from the public.

An independent challenger relies entirely on donations, which for the 2022-23 financial year were capped at \$3,300 per donor, to cover administration, wages, compliance, office costs, data, communications and advertising.⁸ They need to run both a fundraising campaign and an election campaign with the support of volunteers, while their opponents can focus on winning votes using publicly-funded staff. This is made all the more difficult by the fact that the cap applies to in-kind donations, giving challengers limited access to offers of professional support from volunteers, or for the free use of office space.

Political parties function continuously, enabling them to collect four financial years' worth of donations for every election, currently capped at \$7,600 per year per donor to the party plus \$7,600 in total per year per donor to the party's candidates. By contrast, most independent campaigns commence less than a year out from an election, giving them only one year's access to donations, capped this financial year at \$3,600.

The rules around tax deductibility of donations are also skewed in favour of parties. Donations of up to \$1,500 per year to parties are tax deductible year round. Donations to independent challengers, on the other hand, do not become tax deductible until they are listed as a candidate, approximately 12 days before the polls open. This significantly disadvantages an independent candidate as some donors will not donate until donations are tax deductible. This reduces the spending power of an independent at the start of the campaign when funds are most needed.

⁸ While a candidate who receives over four percent of the primary vote will be entitled to public funding, this won't be received until long after the campaign when it was needed, and likely well less than the costs to run their campaign.

In addition to tax deductible donations throughout the entire election cycle, and millions of dollars in public funding, the major parties benefit from access to a number of other lucrative sources of private revenue over the election cycle which contribute to party operations, including:

- **Party membership fees** (i.e. paid by businesses) and **party affiliation fees** (i.e. paid by unions). A review of the disclosures lodged with the NSW Electoral Commission reveals that over the last election cycle, annual party memberships, affiliation fees and other subscriptions contributed approximately \$2.9 million to the NSW Labor Party⁹ and \$5 million to the Coalition.¹⁰
- **Party levies** paid by elected members and candidates ('tithes'). Elected NSW Labor members are required to pay a levy of 6 per cent of their salary to the NSW Branch of the Party.¹¹ Based on 6 per cent levy, this amounts to over \$2 million from state level Labor MPs and nearly \$1.5 million from federal NSW Labor MPs over an election cycle.

Expenditure caps

Caps on electoral expenditure were purportedly introduced in NSW with the intention of levelling spending between parties in elections and reducing campaign spending overall.

However, the design of the NSW expenditure cap regime creates an unlevel playing field for independents. It does not reflect the benefits of incumbency (as outlined above) or the benefits to the major parties who run a full 'ticket' in the upper house and in all lower house seats, and concentrate their expenditure on target seats.

The expenditure cap for an independent Legislative Assembly candidate for the 2023 election was \$198,700.¹² This cap includes *all aspects of the independent candidate's campaign*: advertising, promotional materials, wages, data, compliance and administration. The only items of electoral expenditure which are exempted from the cap are candidates' travel costs,¹³ and expenditure on the campaign office which was limited to \$20,000¹⁴. Recontesting independent members have publicly funded advantages such as wages, office, communications and administration funding.

Of course, it is very difficult for an independent challenger to even raise their permitted campaign funds. Half of Climate 200's NSW campaign account donors gave \$50 or less for the campaign. It would take 3,974 donations of \$50 to raise the maximum permitted expenditure of an independent.

In NSW, a party's expenditure cap is determined by the number of seats contested. For the March 2023 NSW election, a party contesting all 93 lower house seats would have had a statewide spending

⁹ This figure includes disclosed payments received by the Country Labor Party until it was deregistered in 2021

¹⁰ Membership fees cannot be paid into the campaign account so can not be used for electoral expenditure.

¹¹ Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch) Rules 2023

¹² <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/funding-and-disclosure/electoral-expenditure/caps-on-electoral-expenditure/what-are-the-expenditure-caps-for-state-elections>

¹³ This does not apply to expenditure incurred in connection with a motor vehicle, vessel or aircraft decorated with or displaying advertising or electoral material for a candidate or party – which must be included in the calculation of electoral expenditure counted towards the caps.

¹⁴ Costs over \$20,000 must be included in the calculation of electoral expenditure counted towards the caps

cap of \$12.3 million, being 93 x \$132,600 per seat. Within the statewide cap, each party has a district cap of \$66,400 per electorate, which applies to expenditure on advertising that mentions the name of the candidate or the electorate itself. The district cap does not apply to advertising promoting the party, its leadership team and policies, or to negative ads that attack opponents in general terms — this expenditure can be as high as the party chooses, so long as the party’s statewide spending is no more than \$12.3 million.

In addition to the party’s statewide expenditure, each party-endorsed Legislative Assembly candidate is permitted to spend up to an additional \$132,600 on their campaign.

Party-endorsed candidates also benefit from party infrastructure costs that are covered by public funding, such as administration, compliance, advisers and communications. These costs are not counted towards the party caps. A candidate running for a major party benefits from the party’s profile, existing brand collateral, and support from state and federal headquarters.

New parties and independents (especially challengers) start with nothing and must replicate most of the functions and campaign assets of the parties, but without the benefit of economies of scale. Because they don’t have access to the electoral roll and have much higher fundraising requirements, they face significant costs a major party candidate never considers. A new independent can easily spend half of their expenditure cap just on engaging a campaign manager, a fundraiser and the services of a graphic designer.

The NSW expenditure cap regime allows parties to direct the majority of their spending on target seats. This allows parties to *significantly* outspend independents.

Box 1: An independent can be outspent by a factor of 5:1 by a party running in every seat

In this hypothetical example, a party running in every seat is running hard in five priority (“category A”) seats. The party-endorsed candidates each contribute \$132,600 from their own campaign accounts, and benefit from \$967,000 of their party’s expenditure in each category A seat. These campaigns will also enjoy the benefit of the party’s \$4 million statewide advertising campaign.

In the example, the party spends \$250,000 on 15 second tier (“category B”) campaigns and \$30,000 on the unlosable and unwinnable (“category C”) campaigns. Category B and C campaigns also enjoy the benefits of the party’s \$4 million statewide advertising campaign. Those party-endorsed candidates can also each contribute as much as \$132,600 from their own campaign accounts for their campaigns.

Meanwhile, an independent is constrained to running a \$198,700 campaign with a \$20,000 office allowance.

In this example, the party and all of its candidates have stayed within their cap, yet an independent would be outspent in any of 20 seats — by a factor of five in some — and the party has the additional benefits of:

- statewide advertising campaign
- access to the electoral roll
- support from a state (and possibly federal) headquarters
- significant economies of scale with content production, strategy, staff and media buying.

Party				
Category	A	B	C	Total
Seats	5	15	73	93
Party expenditure				
- statewide				\$4,000,000
- in seat (candidate ID)	\$66,000	\$66,000	\$5,000	\$1,685,000
- in seat (not candidate ID)	\$901,400	\$84,000	\$5,000	\$6,132,000
total				\$11,817,000
Candidate expenditure	\$132,600	\$132,600	\$132,600	\$12,331,800
Expenditure in seat	\$1,100,000	\$216,600	\$137,600	\$24,148,800
Independent Challenger				
	Independent			Total
Seats	1			1
Candidate expenditure				
- office allowance	\$20,000			
- rest of campaign	\$198,700			
total	\$218,700			\$218,700
Expenditure in seat	\$218,700			\$218,700
Independent outspent ratio		5.0	:1	

The party will also have received up to 75 per cent of their Election Campaigns Funding *prior to* the election, meaning the majority of the campaign is publicly funded.

Contrast this with an independent challenger receiving 36 per cent of the vote who would receive almost \$83,000 *after the election* — the public funding comes too late and covers little more than a third of the campaign costs.

In a 2023 article, senior Labor sources told The Age that a “strong campaign” for the Victorian by-election in Warrandyte would cost “up to \$500,000”, and that’s not including the value of the party’s brand and headquarters.¹⁵

¹⁵<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/pesutto-pins-hopes-on-cost-of-living-crisis-in-warrandyte-byelection-20230619-p5dhqp.html>

Under NSW's poorly designed expenditure caps, an independent is effectively prevented from running a "strong campaign", while the major parties are largely unencumbered to do so.

Levelling the playing field

Climate 200 recommends the following changes to NSW's campaign financing restrictions, to create a more level playing field:

Recommendation 1: Conduct an inquiry into the design of NSW's donation and expenditure caps and public funding to consider the regime's fairness and impact on participation

The inquiry should take into consideration the nine principles for fair political finance reform identified by the Australia Institute, which include that political finance reform should:

- Not make it harder for new candidates to compete with incumbents
- Provide a level playing field regardless of whether candidates are members of a political party or independents
- Factor in the significant taxpayer-funded advantages of incumbency, with an eye to reducing disadvantages already faced by challengers
- Account for spillover effects and economies of scale
- Ensure that public funding is fit for purpose.¹⁶

Recommendation 2: Create a new entity type suitable for independent community campaigns

Establish a new entity type within the NSW Electoral Act known as an Independent Community Campaigner that can register (subject to signatures from a reasonable number of electors) to run an independent campaign in a single, specified electorate.

Such entities would:

- be responsible for all aspects of campaign management, including receipt of donations, disclosures, authorisations and annual returns
- receive public funding for the independent candidate (when eligible) and have the ability to utilise that funding to support another independent candidate if the independent does not recontest the next election
- be able to receive memberships and subscriptions, in the same way a party does
- be able to receive tax-deductible donations to the same extent as parties (ie. up to \$1,500 deductible per donor each financial year), and
- receive access to the electronic electoral roll for the relevant electorate.

¹⁶ Browne (2023) *Principles for fair political finance reform*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/principles-for-fair-political-finance-reform/>

Recommendation 3: Address the publicly funded advantages of incumbents

Given that incumbents' election campaigns are covered by public funding, as well as their administrative costs, the donation caps should not apply to entities which do not receive public funding, like independent challengers.

Otherwise, before the donations cap applies, independent challengers should be permitted to fundraise into an Administrative Account the amount equal to the funding that an elected independent would receive in Administrative Funding.

Also, before the donations cap applies, independent challengers should be permitted to fundraise into a Campaign Funding Account an amount equal to the funding that an elected independent would receive from the Election Campaigns Fund if they were to receive 35 per cent of primary votes cast in their electorate.

Expenditure from the Administrative Account and the Campaign Funding Account would be constrained in the same manner as analogous accounts held by the parties.

Recommendation 4: Donation caps should apply to *all* contributions to a party and its candidates and members

The donations cap currently does not properly account for the millions of dollars in private revenue that the major parties receive through memberships, affiliation fees, subscriptions and levies. These should all be included in the party's donations cap.

Recommendation 5: Amend the expenditure cap to remove the ability of the major parties to outspend independents in a seat

The expenditure cap rules should be amended to take into account the benefits of incumbency and the ability of the major parties to outspend independents by multiple factors in an electorate. The expenditure cap should apply to parties on a per-district basis, not a statewide basis. Statewide expenditure by parties should be apportioned and count towards the party's spending cap in each district.

Recommendation 6: Only communications expenditure should be capped

The expenditure cap should be amended so that it only applies to communications — e.g. mailouts, digital/newspaper/radio/TV advertising and billboards — and excludes corflute signs, t-shirts, merchandise and associated costs of design/production. In conjunction with Recommendation 3 of our submission, this means expenditure from an independent's Administrative Account would not be capped, only expenditure on "communications" from their Campaign Funding Account.

If incumbents use their communications budget in the six months before an election, any such expenditure should be counted towards their expenditure cap.

Independent challengers should have a higher communications expenditure cap, recognising their higher communications costs. An independent challenger is invariably less well known than the incumbent and/or the major parties. To gain a similar level of name recognition and awareness of their credentials and politics, an independent challenger has a larger hill to climb. This, coupled with lack of economies of scale, mean that an independent challenger faces higher communications costs to match an incumbent or major party candidate.

Truth in political advertising

Misinformation and lies in political advertising jeopardise democracy.

The NSW Electoral Commission currently has the power to investigate complaints about misleading claims relating to elections and voting procedures, but does not have the power to address misleading or deceptive advertising about candidates, policies and parties.

Truth in political advertising laws have been in place in South Australia for several decades. The ACT has also had truth in political advertising laws since 2021. Under both models, the state or territory electoral commission is responsible for handling complaints about misleading political advertising.

Climate 200 believes that NSW should enact similar laws to protect voters from deceptive and misleading political advertising in state elections. The Victorian Electoral Matters Committee and federal Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters have both recommended truth in political advertising laws be legislated based on the South Australian model. The Australia Institute has also published numerous papers over recent years outlining the case for robust truth in political advertising laws.

Recommendation 7: Legislate truth in political advertising laws

Truth in political advertising laws can and should be legislated in time for the next NSW election campaign.

Optional Preferential Voting

NSW is the only jurisdiction in Australia to use optional preferential voting (OPV) for the lower house. This voting system is enshrined in the NSW Constitution.

Under OPV, parties and candidates frequently invest in campaigns to influence voter behaviour with “Just Vote 1” and “Put X Last” messaging — sometimes deliberately and deceptively using colour schemes and signage styles that suggest official communications.

On election day, many electors were met with a barrage of corflutes at polling booths, some encouraging voters to number every box and others encouraging them to only number one box. It

was observed that a party would promote one message in one electorate and the opposite message in another.

The discrepancy between federal elections which use mandatory preferential voting (in the lower house) and NSW using OPV is likely to create unnecessary voter confusion and can lead to voter disenfranchisement.

In addition, OPV adds a strategic dimension to NSW elections that is unrelated to candidate's suitability, desirability or voter preference.

Recommendation 8: Harmonise preferential voting arrangements with federal and other state elections

Restore mandatory preferential voting in NSW to bring the state in line with other jurisdictions.

Conclusion

Climate 200 contends that NSW's campaign finance laws dramatically reduce democratic participation. Incumbents are largely publicly funded while challengers' only funding is via a severely constrained donations regime. The effort required by an independent to challenge a seat is orders of magnitude higher than for an incumbent to defend their seat.

Candidates of equal merit and equal appeal to the electorate do not currently have an equal opportunity to participate in NSW's elections.

The state provides more than \$300 million in benefits to the major parties, and the electoral laws provide them with many other advantages over challengers. Challengers receive no public funding before an election and are reliant on a severely limited funding source.

The independent campaigns Climate 200 supported in the 2023 election performed well given the challenges they faced. In each case the independent had to run two campaigns, one to fundraise and another to win votes. Their opponents had only one campaign, to defend their votes — a task made much easier from atop the publicly funded wall of incumbency. Had the laws been more equitable, the election result could well have been different.

Laws that create barriers to newcomers and entrench incumbency run counter to the ideals of representative democracy. A healthy democracy should not prevent quality community-backed independent candidates from mounting competitive campaigns to represent their communities in parliament — yet NSW's current laws do exactly that.

Appendix: Analysis for \$300m publicly funded wall

1. Election payments

2023 Post election	ALP	\$8,072,280			
	Liberal	\$1,836,651			Total
	Nationals	\$753,656		ALP	\$14,016,016
				Liberal	\$9,190,250
2023 (Advance payments)	ALP	\$5,943,736		Nationals	\$3,298,676
	Liberal	\$7,353,599		Coalition	\$12,488,926
	Nationals	\$2,545,020			
				Indi challenger	\$0
				Total Labor & Coalition	\$26,504,942

Source: <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/about-us/reports/public-funding-claims-and-payments/2023-nsw-state-election-payments>

2. Administrative funding

2023	ALP	973,700			
	Liberals	973,700			
	Nationals	732,200			
2022	ALP	3,636,000			Total
	Liberals	3,636,000		ALP	\$13,950,820
	Nationals	2,734,400		Liberals	\$11,648,900
2021	ALP	3,811,220		Nationals	\$9,392,900
	CLP	865,500		Coalition	\$21,041,800
	Liberals	3,525,200			
	Nationals	3,220,900		Indi challenger	\$0
2020	ALP	3,514,000			
	CLP	1,150,400		Total Labor & Coalition	\$34,992,620
	Liberals	3,514,000			
	Nationals	2,705,400			

Source: <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/about-us/reports/public-funding-claims-and-payments/2023-administration-fund-entitlements-and-payments>

3. Communications Allowance

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	1 July '22-24 Mar	Total
ALP	\$3,710,002	\$3,826,769	\$3,870,861	\$3,936,196	\$15,343,828
Liberal	\$3,413,202	\$3,520,627	\$3,561,192	\$3,621,301	\$14,116,322
Nationals	\$1,409,801	\$1,454,172	\$1,470,927	\$1,495,755	\$5,830,655
Coalition	\$4,823,003	\$4,974,799	\$5,032,119	\$5,117,056	\$19,946,977
Indi challenger	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Labor & Coalition					\$35,290,805

4. Salaries and other allowances for MPs

		2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total	
		ALP	\$17,911,254	\$17,911,254	\$17,911,254	\$17,911,254	\$71,645,016
		Coalition	\$23,460,267	\$23,460,267	\$23,460,267	\$23,460,267	\$93,841,068
		Indi challenge	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
					Total Labor and Coalition		\$165,486,084
Salaries	\$172,576 per annum (base)						
Travel allowance	LA: \$7,085 to \$112,755 per annum LC \$7,085 to \$17,715 per annum						
Electorate office staff salaries	LA: 3 staff members each paid between \$73,182 to \$99,432 per annum LC: 1 staff member paid between \$73,182 and \$99,432 per annum						
Minimum total per MP (LA)	\$399,207 (Base salary of MP, plus min travel allowance, plus min wages for 3 staff)						
Minimum total per MP (LC)	\$252,843 (Base salary of MP, plus min travel allowance, plus min wages for 1 staff)						

Party	Seats Won		Total
	LA	LC	
Labor/CLP	36	14	50
Liberal	35	11	46
National	13	6	19
Coalition	48	17	65

Electoral allowance					
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	1 July '22-24 March	Total
ALP	3,841,339	3,841,339	3,922,008	4,059,212	15,663,898
Liberal	3,535,838	3,535,838	3,610,102	3,736,392	14,418,170
Nationals	1,459,055	1,459,055	1,489,692	1,541,807	5,949,609
Coalition	4,994,984	4,994,894	5,099,795	5,278,200	20,367,873
Indi challenger	0	0	0	0	0
Total Labor & Coalition					36,031,771