

**Submission
No 184**

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Organisation:

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The Director
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To the select Committee on Electoral and Political Party Funding

My name is Frances Catherine Burnham.

My concerns on electoral and political party funding relate to how donations skew the debate towards commercial interests thus narrowing, sometimes choking the debate for comprehensive inclusion of community views and needs. Political party donations, even though they may be viewed on a register, have established a culture conducive to corruption and therefore should be banned. This culture of corruption has also limited the capacity and confidence of public servants to speak out in the public interest.

How then do we strengthen the democratic processes?

1. We need equitable public funding to ensure representative voices are heard across the political spectrum. (There are models from Canada and from Sweden that have strict guidelines and reporting mechanisms for expenditure.)
2. We need to strengthen the independence of bodies such as ICAC, the Public Accounts Committee and the Ombudsman through a set budget free from the influence of the governing party.
3. We need the rigorous investigation of areas of undue commercial/private interest on political processes and accountability through prosecution.
4. We need to protect the rights of individuals and public servants to enable them to speak out against undue influence or report dubious matters by private or commercial interests and a secured right to respond to political or peer pressures when reporting corruption, gross mismanagement, and/or where they have been compromised or improperly influenced.
5. We need to build impartial codes of conduct and uniform processes to discourage misdemeanors.
6. In areas around the voting system, impartial mechanisms need to be put in place to secure boundaries through the introduction of a code of ethics and unilateral reporting systems to determine electorates, rather than favouring well resourced groups.
7. We need a voting system that encourages the cross current of community views rather than one that is biased in favour of dominant political parties.
8. We need to secure the independence of Local Government elections by restraining the involvement of State or Federal political affiliations. This can be achieved through banning aid in cash or kind given by any State or Federal politician (or their staff) in Local Government election campaigns.

I would like to see legislation that promotes transparency and encourages responsibility to and by the people for good governance. The decentralization of power through accountability will reduce the incidence of corruption. The integrity of our nation depends on our security in our 'freedom of speech'. We need to put in place processes to ensure the rights of the individual be heard within a collective support system that is accessible and transparent in its processes.