

**Submission
No 15**

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONS OF THE ELECTION
FUNDING, EXPENDITURE AND DISCLOSURES BILL
2011**

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Draft Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry on Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011

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This submission is being composed for the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Election Funding Bill 2011.

The Committee Inquiry into Election Funding has called for submissions on the content and the working of the Bill and its impact.

This submission is being made by the ADA Sapphire Coast/ Monaro– we are a group composed of 280 odd family members and 200 primary and we are situated on the Far South Coast of NSW.

Our comments to the Committee are in regard to individual donations as opposed to corporate or collective group donations as per Section 96D (1) and (2) of the Bill and in general the whole operation of the funding legislation.

As a club our main objective is the protection of endangered species and outdoor education and we have instigated numerous ongoing programs, all of which are run and funded by volunteers. To fund these programs we have raised funds by running fish raffles, trivia nights, scratchies, cutting and selling firewood and any other means that will raise funds.

As a club of volunteers, we neither have the time, the resources or the special skills to submit a detailed critique on the election funding and disclosure laws of NSW. As a group we can provide the committee with a layman's view on these matters.

It seems to us that this is an attempt to hamstring collective groups such as ours and provide further advantage to the major political parties. We believe the instigation of this bill will assist in the erosion of our democratic system, allowing donations to be made by well heeled individuals (figuratively speaking), rather than groups of less affluent members of society, whose only platform is as a collective.

From our point of view the NSW Parliament is a place where representatives of the people of NSW meet to govern the State. Whilst for decades the Parliament has been the preserve of the Liberal/ National Coalition and the ALP parties, there has been the opportunity for the formation of smaller parties to represent individual groups.

The Amendment Bill which is the subject of this Inquiry is, we believe, in breach of this right and is aimed at securing an advantage to the wealthy or major political groups while limiting the ability of emerging political interests to fairly contest elections on behalf of their supporters.

Firearm owners have already suffered greatly from the legislative burdens placed upon them by Governments of both major parties (Lib/ ALP). Legislative restrictions were formulated to attack law-abiding firearms owners. Undoubtedly both parties allege they maintain high principles and public support for their legislative restrictions and attacks, albeit misinformed,

however this is neither the understanding nor perception of firearm owners generally. Meanwhile firearm owners and front line conservation groups such as ours are now being joined by other groups of Australians who have similar interests. These groups are now being targeted for political gains by both major parties.

Our legislative history has forced firearm owners to become politically active, deserting both major parties and creating their own political party to support their interests.

You may have noticed that recently other groups of outdoor enthusiasts such as; fishers, off-road vehicle clubs and other like minded front-line conservation groups have been the subject of political and legislative attack, again for the political advantage of the major parties. The foundation of the Shooters Party is a direct result of this, and the growth of the Party to include fishermen and outdoor recreationalist is a further development. The Shooters and Fishers Party are now being targeted by a biased media and misinformed public in an attempt to gain support for the major parties own agendas.

This amendment bill is an evil attempt to manipulate election funding and disclosure while at the same time exempting the wealthy players and camouflaging their sources. With this agenda it is inevitable that legislative turmoil will ensue and those ONLY with money for lawyers will find a way to manipulate the provisions of the Bill.

This Amendment Bill is a slap in the face with a cricket bat for democracy. This is not the Australian way. This is not what our predecessors fought for. This is NOT cricket. It is and should always be a fundamental right of all democratic countries, that for an election to be fair and democratic, all would-be participants should have EQUAL access to the election process. We would say that the way funding laws would operate under the proposed Amendment Bill would only be to the advantage of the major parties and this would fail the test.

As already mentioned our organisation does not have the funds, the time, or the legal expertise to make an expert comment on the proposed Bill Amendment, nor do we desire to spend our hard earned funds, already earmarked for front-line conservation, education and endangered species management. However, we would make a general comment. This Bill would not meet any equitable standards for an election.

To conclude, we would like to make it clear that firearm owners have been unfairly treated in the past and have reluctantly been forced into the political arena by the actions of a hostile and misleading media and both major parties. Having contested elections with continuing and expanding success, we will not accept being marginalised and having our representation undermined by laws obviously designed to mislead voters and harm minor parties.

This Bill is an attack on our democratic system and we would like to finish our submission with the following three points;

1. This Bill, if passed, will prevent the Australian public at large from directly supporting the Parliamentary representatives of their choice. This is only an attack on Democracy and our Parliamentary System.
2. The democratic rights of groups to support the parties of their choice to represent them should not be disregarded.

3. This regressive Bill should not see the light of day and should be rejected in its entirety. The very issue of disclosure and political party funding should be thoroughly scrutinised to ensure that it is totally transparent and unbiased and not based on quotas or artificial caps that give an unfair advantage to some parties.

Yours faithfully

E. Clyde Thomas

President

ADA Sapphire Coast/ Monaro Conservation Hunters