

**Submission
No 152**

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Organisation:

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Date received: 22/02/2008

Dr Anthony Harris

21 February 2008

The Chairperson
Select Committee on Electoral and Political Party Funding
Parliament House
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Re: SUBMISSION TO NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO
ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Dear Sir,

I wish to make a submission to the NSW Select Committee on Electoral and Political Party Funding as a private citizen because of my disquiet about the influence of donations and funding upon the politics of my local government area and the broader arena of State and Federal politics. I live in the Warringah Municipality, a local government area in which the elected council has been suspended twice by the state government because of the dysfunctional nature of the politics and the suspicion of corruption in the relationship of both councillors and council staff with developers. Many of my concerns at the local level could be addressed by the adoption of the recommendations contained in the ICAC position paper "Corruption risks in NSW development approval processes" from September 2007. However this paper has not met with any concerted response by the Minister of Local Government as far as I am aware. Declaration of interests prior to elections and caps on funding for people running for council elections would assist at the time of the elections. A detailed register of interests and a public record of any voting would guard against abuse after election. A limitation on any secondary employment and a process to limit the assignment of any single person to more than 1-2 applications by any one person for council staff are simple measures that could be adopted.

In a similar way I see significant contributions made by organisations and corporations with significant interests in development, cigarette manufacturers, clubs, union and industry lobby groups, alcohol manufacturers and gambling interests to nominate a few to both sides of politics. The increasing expense of elections in this country and thus the increased dependence of the political parties upon these funds can only leave government open to the influence of individuals or companies that are working against the general good. Such influence could be limited by a number of simple steps

1. Open and prompt declarations of any donations of cash or goods in kind to either a political party or associated entity. These declarations should be made in real time, thus being available at the time of elections.
2. That all donations to a party be declared by all individuals running for office of that party so that donations by individuals or corporations to an overall state /federal body would be made transparent a local level.
3. Any government contractor should be banned from giving any donation to any political party.
4. A cap on the amount any individual or corporation could donate in any one year. This cap could be \$1000 or less.
5. An enforced gap of 3-5 years between leaving office and being able to take up employment with any concern in the area in which the elected official had oversight.
6. A cap on spending for elections that is monitored at all levels of government.
7. An Australian wide approach be adopted to what is a systemic problem so that donations by large organisations in one state could not be seen to assist a party for work/favours gained in another.
8. Donations by foreign registered companies or interests be banned.
9. Priority be given to the prosecution of those who bribe or attempt to corrupt the process of government and adequate resources be given to election funding oversight bodies.

The purchase of influence at any level of government is inimical to the health of the democracy that we live in. Clear boundaries and limits to what is acceptable, transparency and declaration of interests by those involved in the process and clear processes to guide bureaucrats involved in the processing of contentious issues will help curb corruption.

Yours faithfully,

Anthony Harris