

**Submission
No 134**

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Organisation:

Name: Councillor Jamie Harrison

Telephone:

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I believe when someone goes to a polling booth to place their vote beside the candidate they choose that, they don't care so much how many dollars are spent as long as they know where they come from and who is funding their candidates campaign.

The system has failed to do this in the last Port Macquarie Hastings local government elections in 2004. A so called loophole was exploited when a large grouping of candidates (12) spent tens of thousands of dollars and to this day, nilly four years after the fact have not told anyone where the money came from. This has led to much scepticism in our community.

It was simply reported as a private debt to those candidates through a single advertising companies. When challenged to declare where the funding came from the mayor who represented the group said "all will be revealed in time".

Simply, funding that comes in for a campaign three months after the election does not have to be declared, how absurd.

It has since come to light through some disgruntled contributors how some of the funding were raised and who some of the funding came from and the fact that the money was asked for in pledge form and we don't need the money for another three months.

What happened in the Tweed and in WA stand as a stark warning, of what can happen when elected candidates owe someone something, let alone in this case not knowing who owes who what. Which in this case has led to community concern and now distrust.

Disclosure of donations should be made at the time of the election, or very shortly after and every loophole closed to non-declaration, especially in local government. I would support funding similar to the federal election where an amount is provide on a prorater basis. Cash from the government on a per vote basis would go a long way in making the system fair. Political Parties and candidates should still be allowed to raise funds from donations but a cap should be put on spending that represents a level playing field in local government elections.

Thank You

Cr Jamie Harrison

Port Macquarie Council