

**Submission
No 156**

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Organisation:

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SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO POLITICAL DONATIONS

From: De Brierley Newton

Date: 25th February 2008

I call on the Upper House Inquiry into political donations to ban all political donations from developers and large corporations to political parties and or individual politicians.

I ask that there be a public website established and maintained by the Election Funding Authority where there is prompt and transparent disclosure of all donations and that the part of the reporting process requires each party to identify who their significant donors are and who they donate to eg: if the donation is to a candidate, a local party branch or a state or federal office.

I also ask that there be a cap of say \$5000-\$10000 for any donation made to an individual politician.

Over the years, and certainly most recently, the odour of political donations has hung unpleasantly over NSW. You would have to be Pollyanna to believe that if a large sum of money is donated to a political party, particularly when that party is in government, that there is no expectation of a return favour.

We have seen it time and time again. The Carlton United Brewery site. With climate change breathing down our necks the State Government took the development approval process away from council and allowed the then owners Fosters, to have 2500 car spaces on site - even though the site sits on a transport hub - pushing how many hundreds of extra tonnes of CO2 emissions into the atmosphere every year? The approved height of the buildings rose to the size of a football field and so supersized was the development that 500 apartments and the proposed open park could end up with little or no natural sunlight. The only mandatory environmental inclusions demanded by Minister Sartor of the developer was a watered down BASIX.

I was personally involved in fighting the NSW Labor government when they wanted to turn Hunters Hill High School into Hunters Hill Highrise.

As a community we had to endure two and a half years fighting the government that was supposed to support us. We had to deal with a Labor government that proudly proclaimed that their schools were failing. We had to troll through FOI that revealed that there were no minutes of meetings taken throughout all the discussions to close the school, even though the Minister for Education was present.

Until we organised a demographic survey none had been done, yet the Labor government was closing schools handover fist. The demographics showed that we were in for another baby boom – this has happened – and that there would be a real need for public schools. The Labor government still closed Redfern public, Vaucluse High and Maroubra High the latter which they sold to the French school and which the French School posted on their website thanking Premier Carr for selling the

school to them under market price because he (Carr) had such a connection with France. I wonder what donations the French School handed over?

We presented to School Closure Review Committees, we organised an Upper House Enquiry that found the school should remain open, but so what, the Minister denied the findings and said it would close anyway.

It took a massive media campaign, the threat of standing a local against the Minister in the 2003 State election and an Ombudsman's Inquiry that agreed with the Upper House enquiry that Hunters Hill High School should remain open. The school now holds over 800 students.

Why did a Labor government want to close Hunters Hill High School? The school sat on 6.6 hectares of waterfront land facing north.

Then there was Pitt Town where Minister Sartor not only approved Johnson Property Group's application for the rezoning of 225 hectares of land in the Hawkesbury into 630 lots, further eroding the agriculture in the Sydney basin, but then increased the number of lots approved to 659 to help the developer meet the cost of providing infrastructure.

Pitt Town is one of Sydney's most fertile areas and has been farmed since 1794. The Sydney basin contributes more than \$1billion a year to the economy.

Johnson Property Group donated almost \$350,000 to the NSW Labor Party in the past five years. It also paid Hawkesbury City Council \$40,000 to fund an 'independent planner' to assess its second application.

Catherine Hill Bay is another example of how donations are destroying our communities and our environment. Developer RoseCorp lodged a development application with Minister Sartor for the development of Catherine Hill Bay for a licensed super club, five storey apartment buildings on the Bay's southern headland, and about 1000 medium density dwellings which would swell the village's population from about 250 to 3000-plus.

The remainder of the proposal, on land zoned for Coastal Acquisition on which no development at all is permitted is with Wyong Shire Council and there have been private negotiations with Government.

Lake Macquarie City Council rejected the portion of the proposal that was within its boundary as being against the public interest and contrary to 13 local, regional and state planning instruments. The developer has appealed against Lake Macquarie City Council's decision and has had private discussions with the State Government.

IHAP finished their report to the Minister of Planning, Mr Frank Sartor before Christmas. Their report has not been made public. However the decision from the Minister is imminent.

Rosecorp donated over \$150,000 to NSW Labor before the 2007 election.

From 2002-2007 the Labor government received over \$7million in donations from developers and construction companies. The Liberals received in excess of \$4 million.

Property developers gave more than \$2 million to Labor before the 2007 state election and \$900,00 to the Liberals.

Then there's the pubs and clubs and the Hotel Association. Keno was allowed into hotels even though gambling is destroying families and the number of poker machines have increased in our clubs and pubs with NSW now holding the dubious title of having the most number of poker machines in Australia

The hotel industry - which also recently won concessions for outdoor smoking and poker machine areas - gave \$610,000, and a fund-raiser involving members of the Australian Hotels Association last February raised \$492,000 for Labor.

And then there's Wollongong council - \$425000 in developer donations. Enough!

What faith can we have in the democratic process if our politicians happily accept huge donations from developers and large corporations so that those corporation can do what they like irrespective of the effect it has on our community, our farmers, our children's education and the environment. And for what? For the sole purpose of having more and more money to get re-elected to do exactly the same as they've been doing – taking donations.

What is happening in NSW is that the developers and the politicians are so busy scratching each other's backs that NSW now has an almost incurable rash.

Take the opportunity to act corruptly away and you will find that people will not act corruptly.

For the sake of our society we need to ban political donations from developers and large corporations, cap donations to individuals and set up a public website where all donations are posted now.

De Brierley Newton.