

**Submission
No 104**

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Name: Ms Helen Wilson

Date received: 15/02/2008

Dear Rachel,

I would like to make a brief submission to the Inquiry into Electoral and Political Party Funding based on my experience in trying to save an environmentally sensitive and culturally significant stretch of NSW coast at Sandon Point.

It has been clear to us from repeated submissions to various Planning Ministers and other officials that the state government does not see its primary obligation as being to its constituents and the environment. Rather it appears to have the ear of major developers who in the case of Sandon Point, objected to the recommendations of a state government Commission of Inquiry. This submissiveness has now resulted in Frank Sartor rather than the developers concerned, Stockland and Anglican Retirement Villages, appealing a recent Land and Environment Court decision that climate change must be taken into account in approving coastal development. There have also been major initiatives by the present minister to transfer many of local councils' planning powers to the government.

These moves say to us that the government is unable to stand up to corporate pressures. Apparently it is not willing to face the disfavour of developers because it is financially indebted to them. Even if we are wrong in this case the law allowing large political donations and not requiring the disclosure of relevant government processes invites this view. There is in fact a new aristocracy of major corporations whose capacity to support political parties gives them undue power which is not transparent.

The situation is deeply undemocratic, allowing governments to get away with very unpopular and unsustainable planning decisions. I hope the inquiry will recommend that our democracy be revived by vastly reducing the amount of allowable political donations. Decisions about essential matters of public importance should be made by politicians elected by the people in the interests of their constituents and future generations rather than the interests of developers and other corporate stakeholders.

Yours sincerely

Helen Wilson