

**Submission  
No 1**

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

**Organisation:** Sydney Alliance  
**Name:** Ms Amanda Tattersall  
**Date received:** 15/12/2011

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## **Sydney Alliance Submission to the Select Committee on the Provisions of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011**

We thank the select committee for the opportunity to comment on the Provisions of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill. Our concerns relate to 1(a) of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

The Bill as it stands creates a broad prohibition on donations to, and activities of, so called "Third Party campaigners." It limits donations that "Third Party campaigners" can receive to individuals on the electoral roll.

This could have the adverse effect of significantly limiting the democratic role that community based coalitions like the Sydney Alliance can have around election time, by restricting our ability to fund our public advocacy on social and community issues.

This is because the definitions in the current Act, and therefore this Bill, are very broad. While an organisation like the Sydney Alliance is non-partisan and has no intention of directly influencing who people vote for at an election, the Sydney Alliance and many community organisations, could still be classified as a "Third Party campaigner" if they campaign on issues that "indirectly influence" voting at an election.

In the Act, the definition of indirectly influencing voters is untested, and potentially extremely broad. It could include any public campaigning about an issue, such as the transportation system or health system, through a website or pamphlets. We believe this could be a significant limit on the right of community based organisations to have their needs and voices heard during elections.

### **The role of the Sydney Alliance**

The Sydney Alliance's purpose is to take public action for the common good. Our role is to be an organised voice for Sydney citizens – and we do this by bringing together the broadest coalition of major community-based organisations ever assembled across metropolitan Sydney. We include over 45 churches, unions, religious organisations, community organisations and educational organisations (see attached document).

Like our sister organisations overseas – Citizens UK ([www.citizensuk.org](http://www.citizensuk.org))– we hold public assemblies and campaign around issues that are important to Sydney. In 2010-11 we listened to over 6500 Sydney residents from across our partner organisations, and heard that the biggest areas of concern were social inclusion, community support and health, and transport. We are now identifying specific solutions to these issues and will work with political and corporate decision makers to make improvements to these issues. This will involve making public comment, holding public events and running campaigns on these issues during electoral periods. The intention is not to influence voters,



but rather influence politicians to respond to issues like transport, and discuss specific viable solutions.

However, as the legislation stands, our fear is that this kind of non-partisan issue based campaigning would be restricted by the Bill, in part because of the broad definitions of Third Party campaigning and Electoral Expenditure in the Act. While our aim is to influence politicians, such activity may come within the definition of “indirectly influencing” voters (s 87).

By treating Third Party campaigners in the same way as political parties, the Bill may substantially limit the ability of community organisations like the Sydney Alliance to undertake issue based campaigning during election periods. For instance, our partner organisations would be prohibited from donating to our issue-based campaigns during this period. This is because the Bill restricts donations to individuals on the electoral role. This could severely limit our ability to make public representations on issues that are important to Sydney. Effective advocacy around new train lines or on social dislocation would be limited because organisations like ours cannot fund this kind of advocacy without donations from our member organisations.

This could be changed if the amendments to s 96D did not include third-party campaigners. Or, if a new category was introduced to exempt issue based campaigns from the restrictions currently placed on Third Party Campaigners. The scope of issue-based campaigns could be limited, for instance, to not-for-profit organisations. This would provide scope for community-based organisations like the Sydney Alliance to be able to undertake advocacy on important social issues around elections without being restricted by these new rules around donations.

Amanda Tattersall  
Coalition Director  
15 December 2011

# Sydney ALLIANCE

## PARTNER ORGANISATIONS OF THE SYDNEY ALLIANCE

As at 5 October 2011

Arab Council Australia	 Arab Council Australia المجلس العربي استراليا	Asian Women at Work	
Australian-Filipino Business & Workers Club Inc		Bankstown Uniting Church	
Brighton-Kogarah Uniting Church		Cancer Council NSW	
CatholicCare Sydney		Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney	
Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay		Catholic Diocese of Parramatta	
Climate Action Network Australia	 CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK AUSTRALIA	Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union	
Engadine Community Church		Forrestville Uniting Church	
Glebe Cafe & Kaos Church		Good Beginnings Australia	
Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre		Hindu Council of Australia	
Imagine Sydney Baptists	imagine sydney baptists HopeStreet - Urban Compassion and Imagine Church	Immigrant Women Speakout Association	
Inner South-West Community Development Organisation		Marrickville Uniting Church	
Metro Migrant Resource Centre	 metro migrant resource centre	National Union of Workers	

# Sydney ALLIANCE

National Tertiary Education Union		NSW Council of Christians and Jews	
NSW Jewish Board of Deputies		NSW Nurses Association	
NSW Teachers Federation		Northmead Uniting Church	
Rail, Tram and Bus Union		Settlement Services International	
South West Sydney Legal Centre		St John's Anglican Church Glebe	
St John's Anglican Church Sutherland		St George Migrant Resource Centre	
Sydney Marae Inc		Sydney North Presbytery	
Unions NSW		United Muslim Women Association	
United Services Union		United Voice	
Uniting Church Synod of NSW ACT		UnitingCare NSW ACT	
Western Sydney Community Forum		Youth Action and Policy Association	