

**Submission
No 113**

INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

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Donations are anti-democratic. We should each have one vote of equal value not one vote plus tens of thousands of dollars in donations. Industry recognises donations as a cost of business and expects something in return. Why should I as a citizen have less of a voice because I don't have the money to buy a seat next to the Premier or the Prime Minister at a ten thousand dollar a plate dinner? Where are our values? The Premier has time for developers but what about time for children? The Aboriginal Children's Service in Redfern has not received funding since 30 June 2007. They are still running services with no funding. In the past the organisation provided foster care placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in NSW in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. It also provided resources and counselling to children and families going through fostering, adoption or shared family care. Frank Sartor is pandering to the development lobby giving developers what they want while residents will no longer have a say in how their neighbourhood is to develop. But what about the Aboriginal Children's Service? Is the government going to spend as much time and energy assisting Aboriginal Children as it devotes to the development lobby? Political donations skew the political landscape.

I call for -

an end to political donations from corporations and other organisations;
prompt and transparent disclosure of all donations on a public website maintained by the Election Funding Authority;
reporting on donations to require the party to identify who the significant donors are and who they donate to, that is if the donation is to a candidate, local party branch, state or federal office;
· capping political donations at \$10,000 per individual per year unless the individual is a member of the political party.

1) Currently disclosure of political donations and election expenditure in NSW is made every four years after state elections.

· This should change so political contributions and money from fundraising events are disclosed every year for the first three years after NSW state elections. During the year leading up to an election, disclosure of donations over \$1500 should be made quarterly.

2) There have been a number of complaints at the federal and states levels that some government advertising is for the political advantage of the political party in power and particularly designed to assist at election time.

· In order to reduce unnecessary advertising and increase public confidence in the political process, an independent committee should be set up to scrutinize all government advertising campaigns.

· The committee overseeing government advertising should ensure that all advertising is for important public education purposes and not for any political gain.

3) Currently in local government elections voters are provided with no information on who is funding the candidates prior to the election, and no public funding is available for local council elections.

- Contributions to political parties over \$1500 and contributions over \$200 to individual candidates standing for councils made prior to local government elections should be reported prior to the election and immediately posted on the web sites of the NSW Election Funding Authority and the relevant local council.

- Public funding for local government elections should be introduced. Only parties and candidates who do not accept corporate, union or lobby group donations should be entitled to such funding.

4) Considering the damage donations from property developers has had on the political process in NSW, special measures are needed to cover this category of donation.

- The Election Funding Act 1981 should be amended to require persons and companies submitting development applications to councils or the Minister for Planning to declare all political donations they have made to councilors, their campaigns, their parties or to the Minister or his or her party or campaigns.

5) As many of the problems being considered by this inquiry are replicated at the national level there is a need for reform at the federal level and in other states.

- The select committee should recommend that the federal government calls a national summit to explore all issues of electoral funding, including capping election spending, banning all donations except those by individuals, capping donations from individuals and banning donations from individuals who are not permanent residents or citizens of Australia.

Thank you

Mary Hawkins