

LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

Federal Director

30 April 2020

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee's inquiry into the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Donation Reform and Other Measures) Bill 2020*.

It has been the long-standing position of the Liberal Party that Australian democracy is best served by a legislative framework for political party funding that is fair to all parties, is not unduly onerous for party administration, and takes adequate account of the role of third parties, such as trade unions and activist groups.

Australia's political parties are subject to a rigorous funding and financial disclosure regime under Part XX of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

The disclosure scheme requires candidates and federally registered political parties, their associated entities and donors to lodge financial disclosure returns with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The disclosure returns are published on the AEC website. Furthermore, registered political parties are audited on an annual basis and their financial disclosures are also regularly examined and audited by the AEC. The Liberal Party has always been committed to complying fully with the requirements of funding and disclosure legislation.

Political parties are required to disclose:

- the total value of receipts;
- details of amounts received that are more than the disclosure threshold;
- the total value of payments;
- the total value of debts as at 30 June;
- details of debts outstanding as at 30 June that total more than the disclosure threshold; and
- details of any discretionary benefits received from the Commonwealth, state or territory.

Donors must disclose details of donations made to registered political parties or political campaigners totaling more than the disclosure threshold.

Furthermore, if the total of gifts made to a political party or political campaigner exceeds the disclosure threshold, donors must disclose *all* gifts made to a political party or political campaigner regardless of their value.

The Liberal Party does not support changes to these arrangements that would unnecessarily add to the already considerable administrative and compliance burdens placed on political parties. The Liberal Party does not support changes which fail to recognise that political parties are broad-based organisations with large volunteer wings and limited resources.

The Liberal Party supports the existing funding and financial disclosure regime, which has been in place under successive governments.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Hirst
Federal Director, Liberal Party of Australia