

Labor



27 February, 2017

Senator Linda Reynolds
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Reynolds,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on behalf of the ALP earlier this month.

I am writing to provide the additional information requested by members of the Committee.

Mr. Buchholz requested information about the proportion of donations received by the ALP that fall under the \$1,000 disclosure threshold which the ALP advocates.

As a matter of principle, consistent with our long-standing commitment to transparency and accountability, the ALP National Secretariat voluntarily discloses all donations over \$1000 to the Australian Electoral Commission through our annual returns.

In our most recent return, covering the year 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, the ALP declared total receipts of \$15,015,300.

Approximately 76.5% of those receipts were in amounts greater than \$1,000, whilst the remaining 23.5% fell beneath our voluntary disclosure threshold.

The Committee also requested additional information on how, in the view of the ALP, new technology might assist in delivering a more transparent funding and disclosure scheme under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*.

It is the ALPs view that the Parliament should be moving towards legislating to create a real-time disclosure scheme, where parties are required to disclose gifts and donations on a continuous basis and in a much more timely fashion.

Doing so would require the development of an electronic disclosure system, administered by the Australian Electoral Commission.

Successful implementation of a real-time disclosure scheme will require a degree of cooperation between the AEC and registered political parties, to ensure that the electronic disclosure scheme is workable, does not create an unrealistic burden on political parties, and that the transition to the new scheme is widely understood amongst the party members and volunteers who will need to embrace its application.

I note that the Queensland Government has recently introduced real time disclosure of political donations, requiring parties operating under the Queensland *Electoral Act 1992* to disclose donations of \$1000 or more within 7 days of the receipt of funds.

This is a ground-breaking reform which once again demonstrates the Labor Party's continued leadership on these matters.

I trust this additional information will be useful to the Committee.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Erickson
Assistant National Secretary
Australian Labor Party