Andrew Wilkie MP
INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR CLARK

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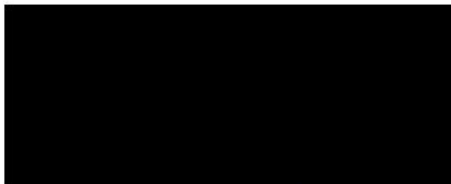Uploaded electronically through www.aph.gov.au/Committee/Submissions

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Lowering the Donation Disclosure Threshold) Bill 2019

This bill is obviously very important and urgently needed, and I fully support the lowering of the political donation disclosure threshold from $13,800 to $1,000. In addition to this reform I also believe there is a need for a sensible cap on donations by individuals, unions and corporations over a parliamentary term; real-time disclosure of donations; and tough penalties for non-compliance. There is also a need for the definition of "political donation" to be expanded to include any expenditure or gift-in-kind that has the material effect of benefiting a political party or candidate.

Political donation reform is of particular interest to Tasmanians who continue to be dismayed by the almost complete lack of effective laws at the state level. Indeed Tasmania has Australia's weakest political donation laws and the situation is unlikely to improve any time soon seeing as the new premier, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, is back-peddling from reform. Currently businesses, groups and individuals can donate whatever they want to political parties and candidates in Tasmania, sure in the knowledge that their "investment", and the return on that investment, remains hidden from effective and timely public scrutiny. To the degree that some Tasmanian political donations might be covered by the Commonwealth Electoral Act, the threshold on such disclosures is too high at the current $13,800, and hardly timely when it can take up to 19 months for publication of these donations.

This bill, particularly with my proposed enhancements, is an important stepping stone to improving the Australian people's trust in politics and politicians which I believe is at an all-time low. In my view this bill is well overdue.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wilkie MP
Independent Member for Clark