



## **GetUp Submission to Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Real Time Disclosure of Political Donations) Bill 2019**

GetUp welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. GetUp has been a strong advocate for real time disclosure as a part of GetUp's longstanding campaign for democratic integrity reforms.

### **GetUp's vision for our democracy**

We believe that everyday people working together and chipping in what they can afford to help create the change they want to see is democracy at its very best. Australia must rebuild a completely transparent system of political finance that amplifies the small donations of everyday people.

GetUp believes these reforms, which should cover political parties, independent candidates, associated entities, and political campaigners like GetUp, the Minerals Council of Australia, and the Business Council of Australia.

Together, these reforms will help to foster a rich diversity of voices, competing in a vibrant battlefield of ideas – a vision set out in our Constitution's guarantee of representative government.

### **Five point plan to rebuild our democracy:**

**Stop the money game:** Cap the amount any individual or corporation can donate per financial year, and introduce expenditure caps on election campaigns to remove incentives to amass huge political fighting funds.

**End the shroud of secrecy:** Lower the threshold for donation disclosure, and to be disclosed in real-time, including donations to and from **associated** entities.

**A corruption watchdog with teeth:** Create an independent federal corruption watchdog with broad investigative powers.

**Close the revolving door:** Prevent Members of Parliament from engaging in lobbying work while they are in office and for a period of three years after they leave office.

**Disinformation:** While upholding the principle of Freedom of Speech, political actors must be held accountable for disseminating misleading material. This is an area of concern for GetUp and more consultation needs to be undertaken.



## **GetUp - strong supporters of real time disclosure**

GetUp goes above and beyond our legal and regulatory requirements for transparency, and is more transparent than political parties.

Since the introduction of the *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Act 2018*, GetUp's disclosure requirements with the AEC as a Political Campaigner are the same for political parties and associated entities.

But GetUp also takes additional voluntary steps - such as having a lower threshold for disclosing large gifts and real time disclosure of ALL income.

GetUp's donations are transparent, and while it certainly throws us open to increased scrutiny, the fact is it's the standard that all major political players should meet. You can log onto our website at any time and see a real time snap- shot of what our members are up to and how much has been donated.

## **Real Time Disclosure of Political Donations Bill**

GetUp believes this Bill can be a good step towards the comprehensive reforms that are essential to restore community confidence in our democracy that has eroded over the last decade. However, donations are not the only form of income received. Whilst GetUp's campaigning is powered by many small donations from everyday people in Australia, that is not the case for the campaigns run by groups like the Minerals Council of Australia or the Business Council of Australia. Their income includes as major sources membership fees and sponsorships.

This Bill should ensure that relevant non-donation income from campaigners of the size of groups like the Minerals Council of Australia and the Business Council of Australia is also disclosed real-time to ensure this reform is thorough, fair, and proportionate.

This Bill does not appear to include Associated Entities of political parties, candidates, and candidate groups. If this was unintentional, GetUp recommends they be explicitly included in the coverage of this Bill to avoid doubt.

It also should be noted that other jurisdictions have real-time disclosure. Queensland requires donations over \$1000 be disclosed within seven days while both NSW and Victoria require disclosure of donations over \$1000 within 21 days. GetUp suggests looking into how these state based requirements are operating to see what lessons can be learned, and what improvements can be made with this Bill on that basis.



### **Administrative burden on smaller parties and campaigners**

GetUp welcomes moves to improve transparency and accountability. GetUp believes that all candidates or political parties running for political office have an obligation to ensure compliance with real time disclosure because of the need for transparency when it comes to those running for, and potentially winning political office.

However, while GetUp is in a position to comply with reasonable administrative workloads related to real time disclosure, it must be noted that smaller organisations, especially charities whose main focus is not political campaigning, may struggle. GetUp is sympathetic to this, and looks forward to reviewing proposals that will ease or remove the administrative burden for smaller organisations.

### **Recommendation #1**

That the Bill define donation or gift to include sponsorships and membership fees.

### **Recommendation #2**

That the bill be amended to include Associated Entities, candidates, and candidate groups, as entities that must disclose donations in this manner.