



Sustainable Australia Party submission

Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Donation Reform and Other Measures) Bill 2020

15 May 2020



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Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission - Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Donation Reform and Other Measures) Bill 2020

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to lodge a submission concerning this Bill.

The Sustainable Australia Party is very concerned at the level of corruption in Australia, which is far greater than it should be. We believe that a key driver of this corruption is donations and gifts made to political parties and candidates for public office. We believe that the rules concerning these donations have not been adequate to prevent ever larger donations having an increasingly corrupting effect on the political process.

The Sustainable Australia Party is particularly concerned about the influence of donations from property developers. State and local authorities are uniquely placed to benefit property developers because of their crucial role in planning and zoning decisions concerning land. The migration policies of Federal Governments and politicians are also of great interest to property developers.

As a consequence, political donations from property developers feature prominently in Australian political campaigning. Their role is fundamentally unhealthy and has led to disgraceful scandals in New South Wales and Queensland, leading to action in those States to ban donations from property developers.

Political donations to Victorian Members of Parliament and to Casey Councillors have been the subject of scandalous revelations by the Independent Broad-Based Commission Against Corruption Inquiry into Casey Council. They have led to the dismissal of Casey Council, and will hopefully lead to donations reform in Victoria along the lines as has occurred in New South Wales and Queensland.

Action to ban political donations from property developers should also happen at a national level. This would have 2 desirable consequences. First it would prevent developers seeking to get around the State bans by making donations to the Federal branch of the political party whose policies they are seeking to influence. Secondly it would enable us to have a debate at a national level about the wisdom of the Ponzi scheme of rapid population growth, without the corrupting influence which developer donations currently has on this debate.

The Sustainable Australia Party believes in political transparency and accountability and strongly opposes corruption. We support the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Donations Reform and Other Measures) Bill 2020. We agree with its provisions to lower the donation disclosure threshold from \$14,000 to \$2500, and to require donations to be disclosed within 7 days. We



support the extension of reporting entities to include political entities, campaigners, associated entities and third parties. We support the requirement for disclosure when the donations provided by the same donor to the same reporting entity add up to more than the disclosure threshold.

It is the policy of the Sustainable Australia Party to cap political donations at \$10,000 in total, per person or entity, per annum.

It is Sustainable Australia Party policy to require more timely disclosure of political donations, and to adopt more transparent reporting of political lobbying and all financial contributions, including a requirement for politicians to declare any time they spend with registered lobbyists. The Bill would assist in achieving those objectives.

It is also Sustainable Australia Party policy to ban all foreign political donations, and to remove the 4% primary vote threshold for public funding of political parties and independents, so that all candidates attract the same public funding amount per vote.

We hope this information is of interest to the Committee. Stopping corruption is an incredibly important public policy objective, and the disclosures at Casey Council in Victoria make clear that any complacency about this issue in Australia is unwarranted. We have no objection to this Submission being publicly disclosed, and we wish the Committee well in its deliberations.

Further policy recommendations to improve trust and transparency in our political system can be found at our website under 'Governance':
www.sustainableaustralia.org.au/policies

Yours sincerely

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Sustainable Australia Party
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