



Electoral Commissioner

Our Ref: 15/488

Lynn Beverley
Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Beverley

Inquiry into the Commonwealth legislative provisions relating to oversight of associated entities of political parties

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry into the Commonwealth legislative provisions relating to oversight of associated entities of political parties.

Part XX of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) outlines the requirements in relation to the disclosure of detailed financial information about donations to political parties and election campaigns. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) conducts compliance reviews on the annual returns of a sample of political parties and associated entities. Amendments to the disclosure record are sought for all instances where compliance reviews identify an error or omission.

I am aware that previous Electoral Commissioners have made submissions to various parliamentary inquiries (including by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters) into Funding and Disclosure matters under the Electoral Act. In addition, after every election, the AEC is required to prepare a report on the operation of Part XX of the Electoral Act which is then tabled in the Parliament. The previous submissions and reports tabled on these matters contain detailed assessments, analysis and in many cases recommendations for the consideration of the Parliament as to changes that could be made to Part XX of the Electoral Act to achieve greater transparency in this area.

The AEC's submission of 4 March 2016 to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into political donations also contained a discussion of broader topics around funding and disclosure.

Given the history of AEC submissions and reports in this area and the short reporting time for the current inquiry, it would appear to be appropriate that the AEC refers the Committee to those previous submissions and reports rather than

attempting to open new areas of potential changes in an area which has been the subject of significant scrutiny and political debate.

There have been no significant changes to the requirements of Part XX of the Electoral Act since 2006. Accordingly, the contents of the various AEC's submissions and reports since that time remain current.

I am happy to respond to any additional specific requests for further information that is required by the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Rogers

25 April 2016