



NICK XENOPHON
Independent Senator for South Australia
AUSTRALIAN SENATE

Vicki Dunne MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Dunne,

Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

I provide the following submission to the Committee, and I would welcome the opportunity to appear before it to elaborate and discuss this issue further.

I am a strong and long time supporter of campaign finance reform.

1. In terms of donation size, political party campaign expenditure and third party campaign expenditure:
 - 1.1 I note that current ACT legislation states that donations over \$1000 or \$1500 to candidates must be disclosed, depending on the time the donations are made. My belief is that a consistent \$1000 limit would eliminate any confusion, as well as any donors who seek to avoid disclosure by donating at certain times;
 - 1.2 Both parties and individual candidates should disclose all campaign expenditure, not just those elements detailed in the legislation;
 - 1.3 Members of Parliament who are up for re-election should disclose any resources (staff, financial or otherwise) allocated to their current position as an MP that is used in the re-election campaign, which opens up the issue of the appropriateness of such resources being used in the first place.
2. In relation to financial disclosure laws, I believe they need to be strengthened in the following ways:
 - 2.1 Party-endorsed candidates should complete full election returns as non-party-endorsed candidates do, rather than have their disclosures included in their party's annual return;

- 2.2 Parties should also complete election returns, rather than including all of their information in annual returns;
 - 2.3 Individuals or organisations donating to more than one candidate endorsed by the same political party should have their cumulative donations assessed by the disclosure limit (for example, an individual donates \$900 each to two candidates endorsed by the same party, totalling \$1800 to one party. This should be declared by the party as it is over the disclosure limit);
 - 2.4 The 15 week disclosure time should be shortened significantly;
 - 2.5 The implementation of a continuous online disclosure system, allowing the public up-to-date information on political donations, should also be considered, particularly in the period once the writs are issued;
- 3. In relation to public versus non-public funding of elections, I attach my submission to the Joint Committee on Electoral Matters as part of this submission.
 - 4. Regarding the regulation of donations and private candidate funding, my concerns are as follows:
 - 4.1 We should not be in the situation where only the wealthy can run for parliament; equally, candidates should not be able to conduct campaigns for virtually nothing and then pocket the windfall.
 - 4.2 Donations from foreign sources should not be permitted.
 - 5. Finally, funding and financial disclosure law should be enforced fully and strictly. The public has a right to know where election funding is coming from, how much they, as taxpayers are contributing and how their money is used, and which individuals and entities are supporting which candidates and parties.

I welcome the Committee's review into this important issue.

Yours Sincerely,



NICK XENOPHON

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