

GetUp Submission to Senate Select Committee on a National Integrity Commission Inquiry

Trust in Australian politicians is at an all-time low and falling fast.

Just 15% of Australians trust politicians, a decrease of 9% since 2015.¹ A whopping 85% of voters believe corruption exists in federal politics.²

These perceptions are dangerous for democracy.

When the public hears news of politicians rorting expenses, accepting dodgy donations, and cavorting with cashed-up corporate lobbyists – these perceptions solidify. And rightly so.

Despite the fact that every single Australian state has established a corruption watchdog, nothing comparable exists at the federal level. This must change now.

GetUp's history of campaigning for democracy

The GetUp movement has long campaigned for the establishment of a federal corruption watchdog with teeth.

Most recently, GetUp members launched a petition calling for a federal corruption watchdog as part of our broad-based Five Point Plan to get Big Money out of politics.

GetUp's petition has already been signed by nearly 55,000 Australians – forming a loud and clear call for a clean-up of our democracy.

GetUp members have participated in bold, attention-grabbing actions, such as standing up to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and declaring that Australian democracy is not for sale.

¹ Trust in politicians at all-time low, survey reveals, International Business Times, 14 December 2016

² Overwhelming majority believes pollies are corrupt, News.com.au, 17 January 2017

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Last year, thousands of GetUp members chipped in to fund a groundbreaking investigation by a leading UNSW academic that revealed an average of only 15% of major party private funding is transparently disclosed – and that 49% of the Labor Party and 66% of the Liberal Party’s private income consists of entirely untraceable ‘Dark Money’.³

Restoring trust in our democracy

A strong federal corruption watchdog with broad investigative powers is urgently needed to restore public trust in politics.

We believe that such a body should be established in tandem with a broad suite of measures to increase democratic integrity and transparency.

³ Dark Money, GetUp!, <https://darkmoney.getup.org.au>

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To that end, GetUp members have endorsed a Five Point Plan to get Big Money out of politics:

1. **Stop the money game:** cap the amount any individual or corporation can donate at \$1000 per financial year, and introduce expenditure caps on election campaigns to remove incentives to amass huge political fighting funds.
2. **End the shroud of secrecy:** require all donations above \$500 to be publicly disclosed on the internet in real-time, including donations to and from affiliated entities.
3. **A corruption watchdog with teeth:** create an independent federal corruption watchdog with broad investigative powers.
4. **Stop offshore entities buying political influence:** prohibit any corporation or entity not registered in Australia, or any individual who doesn't have citizenship or residency, from making donations.
5. **Close the revolving door:** prevent Members of Parliament from engaging in lobbying work for a period of three years after they leave office.

We urge the Committee to recommend the establishment of a federal corruption watchdog in tandem with the other items in our Five Point Plan.