



3 November 2020

**Committee Secretary,**  
**The Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees,**  
Department of the Senate,  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Banning Dirty Donations) Bill 2020*

Tasmanian Election Enquiry Ltd was formed after the March 2018 election in Tasmania, which election was characterised by vast amounts of money believed to be flowing from the liquor and gaming industries into the Liberal Party in Tasmania in circumstances where there is no disclosure of electoral donations at a State level to political parties and none to candidates. All that can be said about electoral donation disclosure in Tasmania with any certainty is that there is none. The only operative disclosure regime in Tasmania is under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*, but that is limited to donations greater than \$13,500.00.

This state of affairs is most unsatisfactory and saw University of Tasmania academics prepare an issues paper that called for reform of Tasmania's electoral donations called *Insight 10 Campaign Finance Reform Tasmania*. A copy accompanies this letter.

In terms of this Committee's inquiry into the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Banning Dirty Donations) Bill 2020*, this organisation wholeheartedly supports that Bill.

One of the unifying characteristics of the industries that are sought to be excluded from making political donations is their impact upon public health. For the liquor, gambling and tobacco industries the link is clear and unarguable. For the other industries and businesses, the need is based on the requirement for Government decision making to be free of the gravitational pull that significant political donations have upon decision making.

Decision makers will argue that the influence of the donations has no impact. Like gravity, the influence of donations is invisible. Like gravity, the influence is unarguable.



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Put simply, if the donations are having no influence on political decisions, why are our captains of business making the donations?

One of the short-comings in the debate about donations from identified industries is the lack of honesty from those participating in the debate. Donors and beneficiaries uniformly deny that any benefit flows from the donation. We are met with claims of “improving government decision-making” or “assisting political parties to run their election campaigns to ensure a healthy democracy” or claims like that. Of course, this is all abject nonsense.

What is good for the property development industry is not necessarily good for the community or for the health of our democracy. What is good for the gambling, tobacco and/or firearms industries is certainly not good for the health of the general community.

It is time for these forms of donations to be banned and it is time for this money to be excluded from the political process.

Whilst this organisation supports bans of the type proposed in the Bill, we would also support a limit on donations from any source of \$3,000.00 per election terms. Politics needs to be a contest of ideas, not money.

Yours faithfully,

Roland Browne  
Director