

SHOOTERS FISHERS and FARMERS



Submission to Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Lowering the Donation Disclosure Threshold) Bill 2019

The Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party would firstly like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry for the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

We also recognise the hard work and dedication of all Federal Parliament staff who were readily accessible and easy to work with throughout the 2019 election.

We oppose the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Lowering the Donation Disclosure Threshold) Bill 2019* on several basis:

- Administrative burden and related costs on our party and other minor parties without any corresponding funding.
- \$13,000 does not exert considerable influence in a federal setting. Therefore, lowering the disclosure to \$1,000, we argue, is a moot exercise.
- Disincentive for donors as it is in NSW, leads to administration for the donor.
- Threshold should be increased as it's too low.

1. Administrative burden and related costs to the party

The Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party argue that such a change will unnecessarily increase administrative burden and related costs to the party.

The change would require existing record keeping and administrative demand be moved to an extreme scale which is not achievable with the current funding we have; this would also lead to further staff stress on a small team. To put large demands on small organisations like our political party, would place us in a detriment and put larger organisations with greater administrative funding and resources at an advantage.

We appreciate any and all donations, although the systems needed to keep up with the amount of disclosures required by the proposed bill would be unsustainable by a small political party. To comply with proposed legislation, we would need tailored IT systems that are not purchased off the shelf, and additional full-time staff to keep up with admin demand.

Options to address this administrative burden and additional expenditure would have to be provided to small political parties. Minor parties are far more likely to be put at a disadvantage with this proposed bill, which would leave the major parties unopposed and virtually winning by default.

2. \$13,000 will not exert that much influence on anyone, so the disclosure does not need to change

The Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party do not understand why \$13,000 (or higher) can not remain the disclosure threshold, given that \$13,000, in all circumstances is not a considerable amount in a

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Federal Election.

When calculating the required moneys for influence on a person in a federal election, the amount required is significantly high. For instance, the standard low budget television advertisement starts at \$20,000 in Australia, and that is only for rural areas.

Any major city would require in excess of \$100,000 to achieve any influence via advertising. Neither \$1,000 nor \$13,000 would likely have a considerable impact on its own.

3. Disincentive for donors as it is in NSW, leads to admin for the donor.

We submit that lowering the donation disclosure threshold will disincentivise donors contributing to minor parties. We fear donors will be targeted for supporting a political party other than a major party. The “quiet Australians” do not want their names on the front page of the newspaper and online for a donation of over \$1,000. Therefore, minor parties risk losing donors without any corresponding funding.

Further, the administrative burden on donors over \$1,000 would also disincentivise potential donors, as has occurred under the NSW system. What would be a simple donation from a donor would be turned into a harassment of their details for disclosure, especially for minor party donors like us. It would also create unnecessary regulator threats of fines to donors.

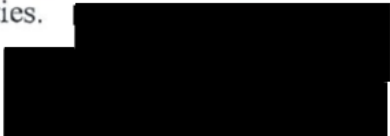
4. Threshold should be increased as it is too low

In these circumstances, we feel that the current required disclosure at \$13,000 is significantly low, when calculating the required funding for campaign expenditure in Federal Elections.

The figure should be much larger in order to keep up with the costs of advertising and campaigning in Australia. A better option would be to increase the disclosure amount to match 2020 inflation.

Things that need to be considered when calculating a reasonable amount in 2020 would be; administration time, television, radio, travel (rural communities), paper marketing, and online marketing.

The disclosure should be increased to allow incentive for larger donations to be made, or a significant increase in funding to smaller parties to allow realistic competition towards the major parties.


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