



A Submission from the Australian Democrats to

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS
(JSCEM)**

Inquiry into

**The funding of Political Parties and
Election Campaigns**

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSC EM) Inquiry into the Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns.

Public funding for election campaigns is understood to have as one of its aims a reduction in the distortions and undue influence of third parties through private funding of the electoral process.

The considerations are:

1. that if public funding simply becomes a “top up” to private funding, then it is failing in its purpose and should be discontinued;
2. that public funding could be improved by greater controls, regulation and disclosure of private funding;
3. that public funding could be improved by widening its accessibility to a greater number of political parties and candidates;
4. that the ultimate way to remove the distortions of private funding might be to publicly fund all established political parties.

We make the fourth point with some caution, as it then becomes a question of definition as to what constitutes “established.” Perhaps, minimum length of existence (eg. 20 years)? Number of members? Existence of state/territory Divisions/State Branches in at least four jurisdictions?

Perhaps it would improve access to the political process to allow all registered political parties a minimum amount of public airtime?

Having considered the above, I have read with some interest the submission made to your inquiry into the 2010 Election by former Australian Democrats Senator, Andrew Murray (Submission No. 3 and its attachments, January 2011). Mr Murray was the Australian Democrats spokesperson on Electoral Matters during much of his time as a Senator.

Whilst acknowledging the views in that submission are Mr Murray’s own, and do not represent those of any other entity, we find we are in broad agreement with much of the material contained therein.

The Australian Democrats therefore endorse Mr Murray’s submission of January 2011 and its attachments and ask that the Committee consider its contents in your inquiry.

The Australian Democrats thank you for your consideration of our submission.

Yours sincerely,

D M CHURCHILL
24 June 2011

