

## **Political Donation Reform**

### **Submission**

Terence Kennedy Mills MLA

The effect of any reform in this area should be positive and foster community confidence in the Northern Territory political system.

Though a retrospective assessment is required to shape present and future policy settings an historical assessment should be careful to faithfully serve the purpose of reform rather than retribution thereby reducing community cynicism.

The building of community confidence and the fostering of greater grassroots engagement in the political process is a worthy pursuit as is reduction of the perception that democracy can be bought by those with deep pockets

A healthy democracy welcomes the involvement of citizens in the political process and an aspect of this involvement is the provision of donations. While at the very least the receipt of a donation carries with it a perceived obligation to provide access to decision-makers measures need to be taken to ensure that this 'involvement' is a positive one.

By limiting the scope for donations to citizens as individuals rather than from entities is a measure to help reduce the influence of groups and associations over the political process and make the support a personal one.

The reduction of the non-reportable thresh-hold for all donations to \$200 along with the establishment of real-time reporting of political donations also serves to make clear to all citizens when a donation over \$200 is made and who made the donation. This should occur within 24 hours after the donation is made. Unlike the current system where this report occurs after the election.

Whether or not 'corruption' exists or not or to what degree it exists is a discussion for another time however the existence of a belief that money buys influence over elected governments is corrosive to the core notion of democracy along with it trust in societal institutions.

The Northern Territory is a small and well connected community. The NT it is therefore particularly susceptible to an erosion of public confidence in the political process because in the Territory are closer to the political process and influencers.

Another aspect of a political culture in a smaller jurisdiction that requires and expects patronage from business is that the demand this expectation can place on business to do what is expected.

In order to navigate the challenges of governing in difficult time trust in government and the people's parliament needs to be high. Reform of political funding and donations is particularly important now. So an opportunity to provide a contribution to this enquiry is welcomed.

### **Transparency International Australia**

I commend the work of Transparency International Australia who have long argued for reform in this area.

The results from Transparency International's 2016-2017 [Global Corruption Barometer](#) show:

The new Global Corruption Barometer results show:

- 76% of citizens think at least *some* **federal parliamentarians** 'are involved in corruption' – including 12% who believe that *most* or *all* are involved;
- 93% of citizens think at least some **business executives** are involved in corruption – including 20% who believe that most or all are involved;
- 66% of citizens agreed strongly that '**financial support by companies to political parties and candidates** should be banned completely' – equal **6th highest** out of 42 countries;
- 79% of citizens agreed strongly that **wealthy individuals often use their influence on government for their own interests** and there need to be stricter rules to prevent this' – equal **3rd highest** out of 42 countries surveyed.

A third of Australian citizens (34%) thought that corruption had increased in the last year, and only 5% thought it had decreased, with most (57%) believing it had stayed the same.

**In summary I propose:**

- 1. Real time disclosure of donations online.**
- 2. Reduce the non-disclosure thresh-hold to \$200 for donations to individuals or to parties.**
- 3. Donations can only be made by an individual.**

**Terence K Mills MLA**

Member for Blain

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