

On 9 November 2008, *The Sydney Morning Herald* published an article entitled “Rudd plans \$1m anniversary party” regarding an event planned for later that month. An excerpt follows:

“Hundreds of lobbyists, business figures and true believers have been sent invitations offering the chance to secure a 10-seat table, with a federal minister in attendance, for \$15,000. Tables with no minister are going for \$5000. Sources say that, assuming most Labor ministers attend, and the convention centre's Bayside Grand Hall is filled to capacity with 1550 guests, the event could gross more than \$1 million, making it one of the biggest political fund-raising dinners in Australia.”

This event stands in sharp contrast with Rudd’s comments regarding political donations two months after becoming Prime Minister. On 26 February 2008, *The Australian* published an article entitled “Rudd gets tough on electoral donations”. An excerpt follows:

“Yesterday, he [Rudd] said he would deliver on his pre-election promise to reinstate the old \$1500 limit on identification of political donors. "I wouldn't be surprised if we went better than that," the Prime Minister said. "I think it was just wrong -- absolutely wrong. The fact that you could have a \$10,000 donation limit ... just do the maths on that. You've got a bunch of people in a room, \$10,000 a hit ... you could easily raise \$1 million in a night. No one knows where it came from. I just don't think that's at all right.””

Like Kevin Rudd, I believe that the \$10,000 donation limit is not at all right. I appreciate the even-handedness of the Green Paper process, but I’m concerned that it’s being used as a delaying tactic, especially since the Labor Party appears to be maximising the financial benefits of the current system while it’s still in place.

Simply by immediately reinstating the former non-disclosed donation limit of \$1,500, the Labor government would bring much greater transparency to the political system.

Then I believe the Commonwealth government should look to the system currently in place in Canada as an example of the kind of “fair go” approach to funding elections that will help level the playing field of our democracy. The Canadian system helps ensure that the democratic process is not corrupted by the influence of large political donations from highly self-interested groups. The system seems to work well in Canada, and I believe it would work well here. Kevin Rudd and the Labor Party have a real opportunity to make it happen.