

SUBMISSION ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REFORM GREEN PAPER
(the Green Paper)

Recent events concerning Local Government Councils in NSW (including the Port Macquarie/Hastings Council (PMHC) which is my electorate, demonstrated the urgent need for reform of our political system to ensure transparency and accountability and to prevent the cynical manipulation of the current electoral system at all levels of government.

Specific to the PMHC 2004 election were the issues of members of political parties forming “groups” then passing themselves off as Independents: third party donations (an advertising agency “lending” money to a “group”): the group taking advantage of the policy of not having to declare donations for 4 years.

In my view, many of these issues have now been satisfactorily addressed in the recent reform of campaign finance laws passed by the NSW Government.

However, it is important that there be consistency between Federal and State legislation.

As noted in the Green Paper, addressing the multiple issues that arise out of attempting to reform the current State and Federal electoral system is an enormous task but this does not mean it should not be addressed urgently.

Much as I would love to do it, it would take me many months to respond in detail to the Green Paper so I will merely put my view which is that Australia should follow the Canadian system. The Canadian model seems to me to address many of the problems faced by legislators not least of which is the reference in 3.70 to the fact that spending on donations and expenditure in Canada has been significantly removed.

In relation to the equity and fairness issue the New Zealand model of providing public funding by way of broadcasting time seems to me to be the best option.

I congratulate the Government on this Green Paper and thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sandy McClimont