

Economics and Governance Committee

From: Robert Rutkowski [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 January 2020 7:09 AM
To: [REDACTED] Economics and Governance Committee
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submission on the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Bill 2019

Categories: Submissions

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk
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Committee Secretary
Economics and Governance Committee
email: egc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Re: Submission on the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Bill 2019

Dear Premier and Committee Secretary:

The Palaszczuk Government's bill to limit political donations and election spending will have the unintended consequence of silencing charities and community groups unless it is amended.

The Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019 is currently before the Economics and Governance Committee for review.

The Bill needs to be amended if it was to achieve its purpose of creating a more level playing field between big corporations and ordinary Queenslanders.

Limits on political donations and election spending are vital to ensure politicians are responding to those with the best ideas, not those with the biggest bank balance. This proposed law goes a long way to restoring democracy and achieving greater political equality. However changes are needed to ensure that advocacy by charities and small grassroots groups is not stifled.

These laws can have unintended consequences for people who are actively engaged in the issues that they care about, be it the bushfires or women's rights. It's critical that the laws do not effectively prevent small charities and local community groups from speaking on important issues in an election year.

The proposal will limit third parties from receiving \$4,000 per term in donations - or less than \$20 per week – for election-related advocacy. As a result, charities and community groups will struggle to raise funds to speak out in elections on the matters they work on.

In contrast corporations will not face any restrictions on the income they can use on campaigning, and will be able to spend up to \$1 million each on election advertising.

If the Queensland Government wants to avoid worsening the political inequality that exists between the gambling industry, mining companies, big banks and ordinary Queenslanders, the proposed laws should be amended so that

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they do not capture small community advocacy, and exempt charities from the donation limits and stifling compliance obligations.

The exemption for charities is particularly important, given that charities are already prevented from promoting or opposing political parties by Federal charity laws.

It is so critical that these laws don't muzzle the voice of charities and ordinary Queenslanders while leaving big businesses to run large-scale election campaigns. If reforms aren't made to this Bill, the Government could inadvertently worsen political inequality in Queensland. However if these amendments are made, these laws would be an enormous win for Queensland democracy."

It is vital that the Palaszczuk Government sit down with civil society before this proposal becomes law to work through the unintended consequences for advocacy.

Re: Human Rights Law Centre's submission on the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Bill 2019.

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Yours sincerely,
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