



POLITICAL DONATIONS

Our democracy has been corrupted by money

No federal requirement for truth in political advertising. Clive Palmer to spend more than \$80 million propagating yet more falsehoods prior to the election. A lack of transparency in political donations (*The Age*, 4/2). Canberra awash with lobbyists who are stitching up deals for their powerful interests. Rorts and pork-barrelling becoming ubiquitous.

It is not unreasonable to conclude our "democracy" has been hopelessly corrupted by money. Tinkering with donation caps will not solve the problem as donors will merely become more creative. All donations come with the expectation of a dividend and thus are corrosive to democracy, so why not outlaw them?

There is no need for private political funding. All that is required for real democracy to function is for each party to present a suite of Treasury-costed policies to the electorate, without any advertising, BS or spin, and let the people decide.

Charles Shepherd, Brighton

What will it take for the major parties to act?

Given the millions of dollars in declared donations and the mega-millions of undeclared donations, we have to wonder whether we will have a federal election or an auction by May. In an election, we get what we vote for. In an auction, the biggest bidders get ownership and use of whatever they have bought.

So what do these big and often secret political donors get for their money? Where is the long promised federal integrity commission? Is either of the major parties likely to do anything voluntarily to stem this flow of dodgy funding? Perhaps an increased number of independents will hasten reform.

Elaine Hill, Warrnambool

COMMENT

Citizens should be only ones making donations

By authorising political donations, company directors place themselves in an impossible position: either they have misused resources of their business for purposes other than the best interests of the business as required by corporations law, or they have attempted to corruptly influence politicians to act to the benefit of the business rather than putting the public interest first. Donations should be made only by citizens, similar to what happens in Canada.

Professor Ken Coghill,
department of management and marketing,
Swinburne Business School

We urgently need an anti-corruption body

Are we being taken for mugs? We vote for political parties but when they get into Parliament they do as the lobby groups and the donors tell them to do. This is not democracy. It is kleptocracy. Bring on immediate disclosure of political donations and a strong federal anti-corruption authority. Now.

Lou Novak, Rosanna

It's time for an overhaul of the regulations

Our democracy is under threat from these donations and uncapped electoral expenditure. For example, in the past financial year, gas companies donated almost \$1 million to Labor and the Liberals. These donations, in turn, influence governmental policies. Remember our "gas-led recovery".

Australia is currently ruled by big money and big corporations, particularly within the fossil fuel industry. Their lobbying is undermining our ability to tackle the climate crisis.

We everyday Australians need to use our voices and our votes to hold political parties accountable. And, as Catherine Williams and Han Aulby say, we also need an "Australian Electoral Commission that is appropriately resourced and empowered to enforce a bolstered framework" (Opinion, 3/2).

Amy Hillier, Kew

Danger when the media gives money to parties

Nine Entertainment Co, the owner of *The Age*, donated \$27,500 to the federal Liberal Party in 2020 but nothing to Labor (*The Age*, 2/2). Independent? Always? Clearly not. (The company has since implemented a policy against political donations.)

Judy Ryan,
Abbotsford