

Dr Sally Talbot MLC
Chair, Standing Committee on Legislation
lclc@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Hon Dr Talbot,

Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on the Electoral Amendment Bill 2020.

While we are broadly supportive of the Bill and very supportive of some elements of the Bill, there are also opportunities to further improve this Bill.

Around Australia we can see a number of other jurisdictions that have greatly increased their transparency and introduced bans on donations from certain sectors. This Bill goes some of the way towards catching up with the other states, but there is still a long way to go.

What the Bill does well

Closing the AEC disclosure loophole

The most important transparency measure contained in this Bill is the closure of the loophole that allows State political parties to provide their AEC disclosure as their report to the WAEC. This had the effect of allowing political parties to abide by the substantially more lax Federal disclosure requirements.

Caps on election expenditure

We welcome the caps on election expenditure for both political parties and third parties.

Where the Bill could go further

Banning certain sectors from donating

The Bill bans accepting donations from foreign donors. We would advocate that the industries that have been banned in NSW and Queensland should also be banned – namely development, gambling, alcohol and tobacco industries. We would go further and suggest that the public health and perceived conflict of interest reasons for banning alcohol and tobacco industries also apply to the extractive industries.

Additional transparency

Currently the Bill only looks at gifts. There are a number of avenues for directing funds to political parties and candidates that do not involve 'gifts'. We are particularly concerned about "Cash for Access" practices and other forms of fundraising dinners etc that may not be classified as gifts. The Bill should ensure that where an individual or organisation contributes above the threshold that contribution is disclosed – regardless of whether the contribution is a 'gift' or 'other monies'.

Timeframes for disclosure

We were disappointed to see that the Bill proposed a quarterly disclosure, rather than a weekly disclosure. We acknowledge that there are practicality issues that need to be resolved – however a 7 day turn around can be done and has been done in Queensland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Doogue'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'G' being particularly large and stylized.

Gareth Doogue
GWA Secretary