

CLEANING UP POLITICS, REVIVING DEMOCRACY

Our plan to stop the rorts and corruption, improve representation and restore integrity to politics

Confidence in politics is incredibly low, and that's not surprising. Scandal after scandal has demonstrated that politicians from the major parties are representing the interests of themselves and their big donors, rather than the rest of us. Without strong, independent and well-resourced bodies to shine a light on decisions and stamp out corruption, politicians and big corporations will keep doing the wrong thing. Their time is up.

The Greens have a plan to clean up politics, improve public participation in democratic processes, and make politicians look out for the public interest, not their own.

THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ **Deliver a strong, independent national corruption watchdog**
- ▲ **Lift parliamentary standards with an enforceable Code of Conduct for all politicians and senior staff**
- ▲ **Introduce truth in political advertising laws**
- ▲ **Lock in funding for ANAO to audit government programs and stop rorting of public funds**
- ▲ **Ban all political donations from dirty industries and cap all other donations at \$1,000 per year**
- ▲ **Protect the right to protest and public interest advocacy**
- ▲ **Improve access to government documents**
- ▲ **Set up a Public Interest Democracy Fund to support public engagement in politics**
- ▲ **Make sure government bodies reflect the communities they represent**

PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share of tax and winding back handouts to big polluters, we can build a better life for all of us.

1 in 3 big corporations pays no tax and many big corporations and billionaires send their profits offshore tax free.

The Greens will tax billionaires with a new 'billionaires tax', require big corporations making excessive profits to pay a 'corporate super-profits tax' and axe billions of dollars in handouts to the coal, oil and gas giants that are driving the climate crisis.

These measures have all been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

When big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share, everyone can have the services they need for a better life.

STOPPING CORRUPTION

After a never-ending series of scandals, people in Australia no longer trust the major parties to do what is best for the community instead of what's best for their corporate mates.

The Greens will provide \$119M to establish a strong, independent National Integrity Commission to hold politicians and public servants to account and to stop big corporations and the super rich from buying the political outcomes that favour them.

Our legislation for such a watchdog has already passed the Senate, but the Government refuses to bring the bill on for a vote in the House of Representatives - probably because they're scared of the skeletons in their closet.

Unlike the weak model proposed by the government, our corruption watchdog will:

- ▲ have a broad remit to investigate potentially corrupt behaviour and extensive investigation powers
- ▲ make politicians subject to the same investigation and enforcement powers as other public sector agencies
- ▲ be able to act on tips off from the public
- ▲ be able to investigate behaviour of politicians going back 10 years
- ▲ hold public hearings, where it is in the public interest to do so
- ▲ provide strong protections for whistleblowers and journalists

SHINING A LIGHT ON ELECTION SLUSH FUNDS

Since the 2019 election, the Australian National Audit Office has revealed the unprecedented scale of rorting of government funds and grants programs to benefit the Coalition. We've seen sporting grants, commuter car park grants, public safety grants and many more going to Coalition or marginal seats to try to stitch up election outcomes.

And we've seen the government use public funds to run campaign ads (like when the Liberal party logo was emblazoned on Greg Hunt's vaccine promotion).

The Greens will end the rorting by:

- ▲ strengthening government advertising rules to prevent public funds being used to promote party political interests
- ▲ locking in funding to ensure the ANAO can audit dodgy government spending

LIFTING THE STANDARDS

'Corruption' doesn't capture every misuse of power or inappropriate behaviour by public officials.

The Greens will establish a statutory code of conduct requiring all politicians and senior staff to behave respectfully, to perform their roles seriously and with care, and avoid conflicts of interest and profiting from their positions.

Compliance with the Code would be overseen by an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission, with the support of an Independent Parliamentary Adviser to provide

confidential advice to politicians and staff who suspect the code may have been breached.

The Greens will also strengthen Register of Interests reporting obligations so politicians cannot hide their interests behind complex trust arrangements.

ENDING THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL DONATIONS

The influence of political donors on government decisions has stopped Australia from taking strong action to address the climate crisis, respect First Nations communities, or strengthen environmental laws.

The Greens will ban *all* political donations from the mining, development, tobacco, alcohol, gambling, banking, defence and pharmaceutical industries, and cap all other donations at \$1,000 per year to ensure that governments work for the people, not the highest bidder.¹

We will also explore options to cap election spending to level the playing field for independents and small parties and prevent well-resourced parties and lobby groups skewing election outcomes by out-spending minor parties and not-for-profit advocacy groups.

PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY

Without the ability to scrutinise legislation, instruments, and other government decisions, the Parliament cannot effectively judge the policy basis or validity of proposed laws.

¹ See Getting Coal & Gas Money Out of Politics policy for more detail.

The Greens will continue to push back against the government's misuse of delegated legislation and National Cabinet exemptions to avoid scrutiny.

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST & ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

The Coalition continues to threaten charities and not-for-profit organisations that engage in political advocacy or publicly oppose government decisions.

Civil society must be supported to openly discuss, debate, and challenge policy decisions, without threats to their funding or unnecessary administrative burdens.

The Greens will defend the rights of charities and not-for-profit groups to use their funds to advocate on important social issues. We will oppose any future proposal to give the ACNC powers to deregister charities for minor offences during protest actions.

We will ensure that reforms to rules for political donations do not unduly restrict the fundraising capacity of public interest charities, and overturn recent amendments to laws regulating 'political campaigners'.

The Greens will introduce a national Charter of Rights that explicitly protects the right to protest.

REPRESENTATIVE VOICES

Politics cannot work for the people without listening to their voices. Yet there is a strong

sense in the community that diverse voices are not heard in the political process.

The Greens will legislate to ensure:

- ▲ government decision-making and advisory bodies better reflect the communities they represent
- ▲ appointments to advisory bodies are merit-based
- ▲ community consultation processes are meaningful, inclusive, and reflected in final decisions.

We will establish a \$2 million Public Interest Democracy Fund, to be administered by the Department of Parliamentary Services, to support trials of innovative programs and digital platforms to increase democratic participation, including:

- ▲ citizen juries to complement Parliamentary processes on issues of public significance
- ▲ reforming question time to allow questions from the public and more robust scrutiny of government decisions
- ▲ allowing petitions with more than 5,000 signatures to trigger parliamentary debate on issues.

The Greens will also work to ensure parliament better reflects the people it represents, and the diversity of the Australian community. We will:

- ▲ Support Constitutional reform to allow public servants and Australian citizens

with dual nationality to run for parliament.

- ▲ explore mechanisms to make parliamentary sittings more family-friendly, including increased remote attendance and shared roles
- ▲ Implement all recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Set the Standard* review to ensure parliament is a safe and respectful workplace for everyone.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Democracy is healthiest when communities have access to information. Greater transparency of government decisions leads to better decision-making.

But Australia's current Freedom of Information (FOI) system is woefully underfunded and poorly implemented, leading to significant delays and hurdles to accessing information.

The Greens will promote open government and ensure government agencies are resourced to provide timely, comprehensive access to documents. We will continue to oppose government claims of Cabinet confidentiality for National Cabinet documents and decisions.

We will review funding to the Australian Information Commissioner to ensure a dedicated FOI Commissioner is effective in reducing appeal times and providing training and support for government information officers.

HOW THE GREENS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR YOU

The Greens will always put the public interest ahead of corporate greed.

In the last parliament, it was the Greens who:

- ▲ Passed through the Senate our bill for a strong, independent corruption watchdog
- ▲ Introduced a Bill for an enforceable code of conduct for all politicians
- ▲ Consistently spoke out against the corrupting influence of donations and policy favours done for donor mates
- ▲ Called for an inquiry into government grants being used as election slush funds
- ▲ Called for increased funding for the ANAO, Commonwealth Ombudsman and Information Commissioner to provide independent oversight of government spending and decision-making.
- ▲ Supported charities to oppose changes that would make it harder for them to engage in public interest advocacy work

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