



Saffron Zomer
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Dear Saffron

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important campaign.

I am pleased to lend my support to the commitments contained in the Framework for a Fair Democracy.

Establishing a robust federal integrity commission

The Australian Federal Integrity Commission Bill that I have put to parliament has been described as 'gold standard.' The federal government is the only jurisdiction in Australia without an integrity commission. It is now more than 1200 days since the Prime Minister promised a federal integrity commission. The Prime Minister has since broken that promise and refuses to make that promise again ahead of the next election.

The weak model that the Prime Minister put up is full of design flaws. It could not receive public referrals. It would not hold public hearings. And it has such a narrow definition of corruption that it wouldn't capture anything that's already captured under criminal law. The model is so weak, that the Centre for Public Integrity has described it as 'the weakest watchdog in the nation' and the kind of integrity body one establishes when they do not want one at all.

The bill I introduced to the Parliament would be fully equipped with the powers and resources it needs to do its job. It would also have safeguards to protect the privacy and reputations of whistleblowers and others who come forward. I wrote the bill in consultation with eminent retired judges, leading ethicists, legal academics, civil society leaders, and MPs from across the Parliament who wish to see strong action on integrity.

As an independent, I'm free to vote for the people of my electorate every time and call out the major parties when they get it wrong. I'll never stop fighting until Australia has a robust federal integrity commission in place to stamp out corruption and stop the waste of taxpayer dollars, especially in difficult economic times like the present.

I was also proud to introduce the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standards Bill alongside the integrity commission bill. That bill would establish a code of conduct applicable to all MPs and their staff, as well as an independent Parliamentary Standards Commissioner to receive and handle complains made in breach of that code of conduct. Unlike the current Ministerial Code of Conduct which is exploited for political purposes by the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner I have proposed would be independent of government, without interfering in the democratic process of parliament.

Political donations reform

Since entering politics, I've made it clear I have major concerns with current political donation and lobbying laws in Australia which harm our democracy and need an urgent overhaul.

Dr Helen Haines MP

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As the independent Member for Indi, I disclose the name and amount of every cash donation I receive above \$1,000 every three months. That includes smaller donations from the same person that together total over \$1,000. I am also committed to disclosing the names of anyone who donates more than \$14,500 within five business days. It's the most ambitious and transparent donations policy in Parliament, and I'm proud of it. You can see all that information on my website which I update regularly.

Around election time, it's common practice for major party donations not to be disclosed until long after Australians go to the ballot box. The major parties also use their complex organisational structures to hide exactly where their political donations come from, which candidates they go to, and for what purpose. That's just completely unacceptable.

I also strongly support placing a cap on political donations. Right now, there's absolutely no cap on the amount of donations politicians can receive. That means the richest donors can compete for the most influence. That's undemocratic and it's got to stop.

The latest tranche of data released by the Australian Electoral Commissioner last year showed that Australia's weak donation laws allowed the major parties to hide the origins of over \$1 billion in income and donations over the past two decades. We need a cap on political donations, and we need one now. I'm proud to support crossbench colleagues like Andrew Wilkie MP who've proposed caps on political donations, and the other reforms to foreign donations he's ushered in.

Honesty in political advertising

I strongly support introducing standards of honesty in election campaigns and advertising.

Under current laws it is perfectly legal to lie in a political ad. That means it's entirely possible for political parties and candidates to make false or misleading claims in the lead up to an election – and they already are. Public trust in politicians has been eroded over time, and with these laws it's easy to see why.

That's why I was pleased to work with my crossbench colleague independent Zali Steggall MP on the introduction of her bill to prohibiting misleading or deceptive political advertising. It's based off the same models in South Australia and the ACT that are both now operational and have captured state-run political advertisements that were considered offensive. It's entirely possible to regulate truth in advertising. We do it every day under consumer law and defamation laws around the nation. It's time we did the same when it came to political advertising.

Thank you again for getting in touch about these important issues.

Yours faithfully



Dr Helen Haines MP
Independent Federal Member for Indi

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