

Australian Youth Climate Coalition
Level 5, 444 Queen St Brisbane

Committee Secretary Economics and
Governance Committee
Parliament House George Street Brisbane
Qld 4000

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

January 8 2020

Dear Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Bill 2019 (Bill)*. The Australian Youth Climate Coalition is a non-partisan, independent registered charity building a movement of young people for action on climate change. In Queensland, we are primarily focussed on organising and educating communities around climate solutions and advocating for clean energy projects that will provide good jobs for Queenslanders. We have a supporter base of approx. 250,000 people nationally, including 50,000 people in Queensland.

We applaud the stated intention of this Bill to make elections fairer, and to limit the influence of big money over politicians in Queensland. Transparency and fairness in electoral funding are essential in ensuring that political candidates act in line with the best interests of Queenslanders and our environment.

However, we hold concerns that the effect of the proposed donation caps and the onerous nature of the new reporting obligations are such that small organisations working on local issues and charities doing advocacy in Queensland will not be able to comply.

In particular, we are concerned about the additional administration and financial expertise which would be required for our youth-led nonprofit organisation to comply with the donation disclosure and reporting requirements of the current Bill. An example of this is the requirement regarding “real time” donation disclosure. In the face of strict caps on contributions from individual donors, and thus the likelihood of managing many small donations, our organisation may struggle to keep up if the timeframes for disclosure are reduced.

The new requirements for handling donations to be used for electoral expenditure—including the notification requirements for donations >\$1,000 to be made by recipient and donor alike, the requirement to appoint an agent and maintain a state bank account, and determining what

classifies as electoral expenditure-- are complex, impractical and potentially a significant barrier to advocacy.

Being led by young people, AYCC has a very small number of staff with appropriate skills to manage the reporting and compliance requirements outlined in this Bill; this task is likely to take a large proportion of their time and limit their ability to conduct other work towards furthering our charitable purpose. Further, while we ourselves do have some staffing and administration capacity, we are concerned this may have a chilling effect on the ability for very small, volunteer-run organisations to engage with the political debate at any level.

In addition, donations that are not related to or used for electoral expenditure should not have to be disclosed to the Queensland Electoral Commission by registered charities. The Australian Youth Climate Coalition supports an amendment to the Bill (section 263) to state clearly that donations that are not used for electoral expenditure are not required to be disclosed to the Queensland Electoral Commission.

We look forward to working with all parties involved to ensure a Bill which fulfils the aim of realising fair and transparent elections, while protecting the rights of charities and community groups to advocate meaningfully on issues of public interest without being unfairly constrained by additional costs and restrictions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Fuller', written over a horizontal line.

Alex Fuller
National-Co Director
Australian Youth Climate Coalition