Public funding and associated laws are not an area of my speciality. For that reason I will not be making a detailed submission.

However, I would make the following comments.

There are two problems with the current donation laws. The first is that a donation only becomes public long after the election. The second is that recent changes to the laws banning certain types of donors can create problems for a party or candidate in determining whether a donor is on the banned list.

I believe the best reform would be to remove most of the restrictions on who can donate, and shift the system to operate on the basis of continuous disclosure.

Parties should be required to operate a single account into which donations are paid. Details of who has made the donation would be publicly released as soon as possible. The Electoral Commission or Funding Authority would be permitted to monitor the operation of the account.

This would make the system more transparent by allowing the intent of a donor to be assessed by the public at the time the donation was made rather than long after the event. If certain types of donations are controversial, parties may be less likely to accept them knowing they would become public knowledge.

It would then be illegal to accept a donation that was not put through an official account.

A process that is more transparent in making donations public is preferable to banning certain types of donors. If donation information is made available in a timely and easily accessible manner, then other participants in the political process will keep an eagle eye on what other participants are doing. The public will be better informed by this process.

I am certain that your panel will be receiving similar suggestions with more detail than it possible for me to provide.

Yours,

Antony Green
ABC Election Analyst