

Inquiry into the Final Report of the Expert Panel – Political Donations and the Government’s Response

Unions NSW Response to Questions on Notice

1. *What is Unions NSW view on caps on donations for local government?*

Unions NSW supports the application of the current legislation and caps which apply to third party campaigners in state elections also applying to third party campaigners in local government elections.

2. *Obviously, as the only third party campaigner appearing before this Committee, you have heard evidence and been involved in the discussion today. Please take on notice why it is necessary to have the cap on expenditure by third party campaigners at no more than \$500,000. You have already addressed this issue and we have had the discussion, but there may be other issues you wish to address as we have time constraints on this hearing. Please come back to us with any other ideas or proposals that occur to you.*

As Unions NSW outlined in our written submission, we do not believe the Expert Panel or the NSW Government have provided sufficient arguments to justify a reduction in the expenditure cap for third party campaigners.

The Expert Panels recommendation to halve the expenditure cap of third party campaigners was based on the premise that in the 2011 election the highest spend of a third party campaigner was \$387,000 (NRMA) and therefore adjusting the cap to \$500,000 will not have an impact on the ability of third party campaigners to campaign during an election period.

However, this does not take into account the spending of third party campaigners in the 2015 NSW election. The closing date for third party campaigners to lodge the expenditure returns for the 2015 State election has passed. However, the expenditure of third party campaigners has not yet been published. Unions NSW believes it would be premature for the Joint Committee to take a position on the spending of third party campaigners without reviewing the expenditure from the 2015 election. It is Unions NSW understanding that this information will be released before the end of the year.