

The Examiner

Greens, independents furious as Labor 'gives up' on donation reform

By [Benjamin Seeder](#)

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Tasmania currently lacks state-based regulations over political donations. File photo

Tasmanian Greens and upper house independents are furious, after Labor confirmed it will not press its own proposed amendments to a political donations bill in the Legislative Council and will not support other amendments to the long-delayed bill.

Leader of Opposition Business in the Legislative Council, Sarah Lovell, said Labor made the decision because there was "very little appetite" in the government to progress the reform bill, and any amendments would likely result in the government not progressing the bill.

"It is now clear to us that any amendments to the current bill will not be progressed back to the House of Assembly by this government, and will only lead to yet another election with no disclosure regime whatsoever," she said.

"For this reason, we will not be moving the amendments we had previously foreshadowed, and we will not be supporting any amendments today."

Independents and Greens have said the Electoral Disclosure and Funding bill in its present form would leave Tasmania with the weakest donation laws in the country.

They immediately criticised Labor's decision to walk away from amendments they had worked on for over a year.

Greens leader Dr Rosalie Woodruff said it was another case of Labor backing the Liberals "for the worst reasons".

"Rebecca White has made the spineless and bizarre decision to abandon her commitments to Tasmanians to make our electoral laws as strong as possible," she said.

Nelson MLC Meg Webb called Labor's decision a "betrayal" of the Tasmanian community.

The Liberal governments long-delayed and flawed Electoral Disclosure and Funding Bill is set to be waved through the Upper House by the Labor Party," she said.

"The Legislative Council was witness to one of the most deplorable, shameful and gutless political capitulations and blame-shifting I have ever seen."

Dr Woodruff also called Labor's stated reason for its decision "a load of rubbish".

"Ahead of their decision, we passed them clear advice that shows the House of Assembly is able to make sure the legislation is debated promptly - but Labor ignored it.

"The only conclusion we can make is they have put their party's self-interest ahead of what's best for Tasmania's democracy."

The Electoral Disclosure and Funding bill was tabled in the lower house 16 months ago and passed through the House of Assembly last November.

But it then sat dormant in the Legislative Council until September, as the government prioritised other legislation ahead of it, prompting claims the

government was delaying it deliberately to ensure its provisions would not apply to the next state election.

The bill has been criticised by the opposition, Greens and independents as inadequate, with a donations disclosure threshold much higher than the threshold seen in most other states and territories.

It would require political candidates and parties to publicly declare electoral donations of more than \$5000.

The bill also prohibits some foreign and anonymous donations, and requires third-party campaigners to register as agents, and for donations to be paid into and spent out of separate campaign bank accounts.

Donation disclosures would have to be made weekly during electoral campaigns, but only every six months outside of campaign periods.

Labor amendments would have lowered that threshold to \$1000, and also introduced spending caps for House of Assembly elections.

The opposition had also signalled it might also move to amend the bill to ban donations from property developers, gambling, tobacco and liquor companies.

Labor has now abandoned those plans.



Leader of Opposition Business in the Legislative Council, Sarah Lovell. File picture

"We remain entirely committed to the reforms covered in the amendments we circulated and our policy position has not changed," Ms Lovell said.

"Labor remains committed to further reform, and will create an opportunity as soon as we can for us to debate measures to take the reforms even further.

"But most likely, it will be up to a Labor Government to deliver the reforms required for all Tasmanians to have faith in the political process."