

Election donation bill passed amid criticism as 'weak'

Benjamin Seeder

TASMANIANS will go to the next state election with stricter new rules about how much money political candidates can accept before they most publicly disclose the donation.

Attorney-General Guy Barnett said the passage of the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Bill 2022 meant Tasmanians could have more confidence in their electoral system.

The new law, which passed the Legislative Council on

Thursday, mandates the disclosure of political donations of over \$5000 and reporting of electoral expenditure by candidates.

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

It also provides for reimbursements of \$6 per vote in election spending for candidates who get more than 4 per cent of the primary vote in a lower house election.

"The Bill was the subject of an extensive public and

stakeholder consultation process and the feedback received informed the version of the bill that was presented to parliament," Mr Barnett said.

"It confirms our commitment to a fairer, more transparent and modern electoral system for our state."

Tasmania was the only state that lacked its own electoral donations legislation, and the bill's passage will bring the state in to line with other Australian states, he said.

But critics have attacked

the reform as weak and a missed opportunity.

Tasmanian Constitution Society President Neil Spark said the reform left Tasmanians with the "second-weak-est" donations laws in the country.

"The legislation passed by parliament yesterday is inadequate," he said.

"The threshold for the public declarations of donations will be \$5000. Only South Australia has a higher threshold - \$5575."

He said Tasmania should have followed the ACT, Vic-

toria, NSW and Queensland in bringing in a \$1000 threshold, he said.

"Democracy depends on transparency, especially where money is involved, which is why donations should be made public within 24 hours during an election campaign or at other times within 30 days.

Independent Nelson MLC Meg Webb said while the bill attempted to bring Tasmania into line with other states, it fell short in many ways.

"This legislation should have been better, and it so

easily could have been better," she said.

"I am bitterly disappointed and very angry on behalf of the many Tasmanians who have campaigned so long and so hard for further meaningful political donations reforms."

The bill narrowly passed its final Upper House vote with support from Labor, with six independent MLCs voting against it.

The bill passed the House of Assembly in 2022, but languished in the upper chamber for nearly a year.