

# Swipe as donation laws get go-ahead

**Blair Richards**

Long-awaited political donations disclosure laws have passed the Tasmanian parliament, despite widespread concerns the framework is too weak.

The Bill to require political candidates and parties to publicly declare electoral donations of more than \$5000 was finalised on the last sitting day of the year.

After passing the Legislative Council on Thursday morning, the Bill received final approval in the House of Assembly in the afternoon.

Last month the state opposition shocked independent upper house MPs by announcing Labor would abandon amendments such as lowering the donation threshold.

Labor argued that if the Bill was amended, the state would end up with no donations disclosure laws before the next election because the state government would reject the amendments.

While Thursday's result was expected, independent MLCs vented their frustration.

"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," said Nelson MLC Meg Webb.

"Not only have Tasmanians been failed by the government's delays and third-rate legislation, but also by the betrayal of Labor who deliberately vacated the space during

debate on this legislation."

In a joint statement, Launceston MLC Rosemary Armitage and McIntyre MLC Tania Rattray said they were "extremely disappointed".

"The self-interest evidenced on the part of both the Liberal and Labor parties has resulted in a Bill that is manifestly unfit for the purposes of accountability, fairness and equity. With 85 pages of amendments, many of which were initially put forward by the Labor opposition – only for an eleventh-hour backflip by the Labor opposition who then voted with the government," the statement said.

Attorney-General Guy Barnett said the government was honouring its commitment to bring in state-based laws.

"We believe the Bill strikes the right balance," he said.

Labor MP Ella Haddad said her party's decision to allow the Bill through the upper house had helped ensure Tasmania would have a state-based donations disclosure system.

Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff said Labor's actions around the Bill had been "sickening".

"It's such a low bar with the Labor Party," she said.

Other changes contained in the legislation include public funding for House of Assembly elections.

There will be no caps on donations by a single donor and there will be no spending limit for House of Assembly elections.