



GreenActive

No. 4
Spring 2002
ISBN 1443 6965

from the offices of Senator Kerry Nettle, Lee Rhiannon MLC & Ian Cohen MLC

Political Donation Reforms

The Greens are developing a package of reforms to the political donation system that will form the basis of a number of private member's Bills. This work is based on a major research project undertaken by Norman Thompson.

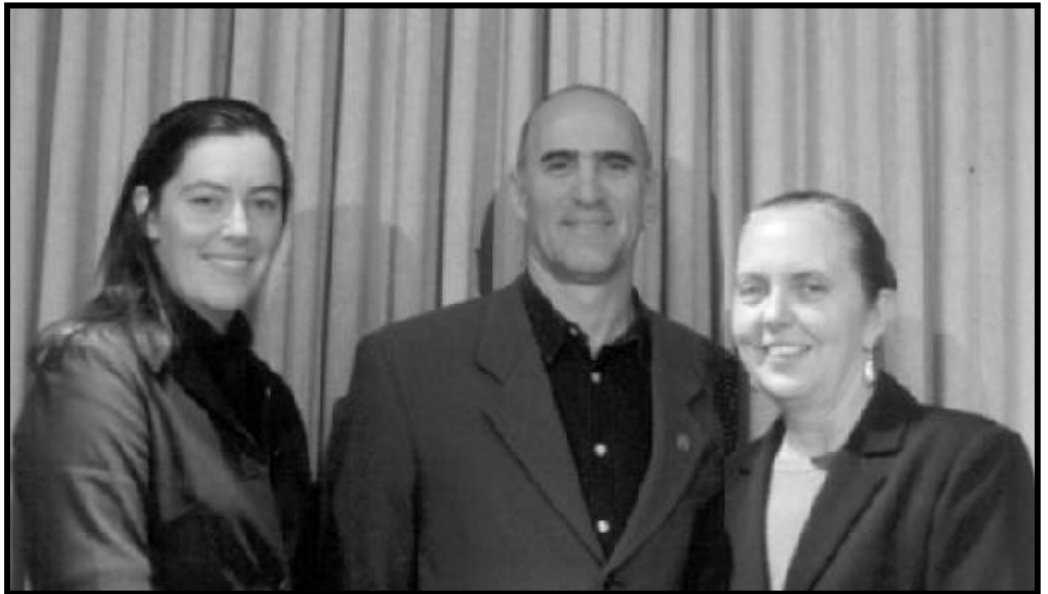
The research project has uncovered \$30 million worth of transactions received by the Labor, Liberal and National parties over the past 3 years in NSW alone. After unions, property and construction companies are the biggest supporters of Labor.

The Coalition's biggest backers are Liberal Party controlled fundraising companies, followed by the finance sector, which donated \$1.9 million, and the property sector, which handed over \$1.8 million.

Premier Carr's response to mounting pressure for reform of political party fundraising is to argue that a national approach is needed. This is a ploy by Labor to keep the donations flowing until after the state election.

The Greens' parliamentary offices in NSW produce an e-brief email newsletter every week or so - to subscribe email: lee.rhiannon@parliament.nsw.gov.au

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Senator Kerry Nettle, Ian Cohen MLC & Lee Rhiannon MLC

Lee Rhiannon's office is currently drafting a Bill that would:

- Ban political donations from developers.
- Enable Parliament to disallow "call-ins", the process by which the government takes over as consent authority on a development.
- Require continuous disclosure of income & spending, with transactions having to be declared to the State Electoral Office within three months.

Both the research and the Bill will be available when completed at www.nsw.greens.org.au/lee.

The Bill will also include key aspects of the Charter of Political Reform developed by councillors from Warringah, Manly & Pittwater Councils. The Charter has been drawn up in response to corruption in local government. Both major parties have been shown up by these councillors' efforts to address corruption at the

Senator Nettle gets to work

On July 1st Kerry Nettle officially became the first Greens Senator for NSW. Kerry was elected in last year's election but because of the fixed Senate cycle she has had to wait until now to start her 6-year term. Kerry's first task is to work closely with Bob Brown to set her program for the coming year. Current hot favourites for major campaigns include land clearing, the "war on terrorism" and corporate globalisation, amongst many others.

local level.

Senator Nettle will take up the issue of donations to political parties at the national level. She has already started research into loopholes in federal disclosure laws and is working on a detailed report to expose the flaws.

GE Watchdog unable to protect the public interest

Kerry Nettle has cast serious doubt on the effectiveness of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) and its advisory committees.

Highlighting the fact that the regulator is set up to be self-funding and that these funds are to be sourced from the very organisations (biotech firms such as Monsanto) which it is supposed to regulate, Senator Nettle publicly questioned the independence of this federal government body.

Kerry will be calling on Agriculture Minister Warren Truss to explain how he intends to protect conventional and in particular organic farming from the threat of GE contamination, given the inability or unwillingness of the OGTR to do so.

In the NSW Parliament the Gene Technology Bill is expected to be debated in the Spring Session. The Greens will be arguing that the safety of genetically engineered organisms must be conclusively demonstrated before any release can occur.

Superdump buried

The Carr govt got it right when they buried a proposal to build a superdump at Ravensworth near Singleton earlier this year. The proposal was always outrageous, as Sydney needs to learn to limit its production of waste, not dump it in regional areas. The Thiess proposal for Ravensworth would have threatened the quality of the Hunter River and Singleton's water, increased the phylloxera risk to Hunter vineyards and compromised the health of the entire area. It was dropped after a great campaign by local community groups supported by the Greens. Greens MPs spoke in the Upper House against the superdump and asked a series of questions. Labor

heard the message that landfill is yesterday's solution. Now they have to stop following the industry line and introduce Container Deposit Legislation.

Sandon Point picket

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy and community picket to save Sandon Point, near Bulli, has now been in place for over a year and mobilised thousands to save this beautiful area from another greedy developer. The land, rich in Aboriginal heritage, is part of the last remaining green link between the ocean and the escarpment. The community picket, which receives strong support from the Greens and the South Coast Labor Council, and court action held the developer at bay for a few weeks but work has now commenced. Greens MLCs have raised this issue with relevant Ministers, who deferred to local authorities, conveniently forgetting that the NSW government has the power to end such development. As we went to press the case was back in the Land and Environment Court.

Whale freeway

In July the Greens office in the NSW Parliament was alerted to Naval exercises on the south coast that involved shelling across the migratory route of humpback whales, a threatened species. Lee Rhiannon contacted the Environment Minister, who immediately brought in the National Parks and Wildlife Service to investigate with a view to drawing up a better management arrangement between the NPWS and the Navy. The protests have prompted the Navy to come up with its own guidelines to avoid interference with whales.

Costa costs Labor on civil liberties

Although rumblings about NSW

Police Minister Costa's performance are on the increase, Labor appears keen to fight a law-and-order election.

The raft of bills Labor has pushed through in recent months will result in:

- The denial of bail for repeat offenders, a measure expected to increase the number of indigenous people in gaol.
- Sniffer dog operations that will legitimise police harassment of people in pubs and clubs, on public transport and on the street.
- The extension of police powers to issue on-the-spot finger printing and fines for a range of crimes, a gimmicky idea that will undermine the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.
- The curtailment of the ability of groups and individuals to collect information on corrupt police.

The Greens opposed these bills. The Coalition Opposition comeback has been to push for mandatory minimum sentencing and zero tolerance policing.

The Greens are committed to making communities safer but for us solutions should deliver positive outcomes rather than criminalising the poor, the drug dependent and the mentally ill.

Public School Closures: Carr's Shame Continues

Education Minister John Watkins was brought in by Premier Bob Carr to clean up the mess created by his predecessor. But like the former Minister Aquilina, Watkins has failed to hear the message. So despite the recommendations of an Upper House Inquiry to not close public schools, despite a strong community campaign in which the Greens played a major role, and despite the foolishness of selling off the future of public education, Watkins is pushing ahead with the closure and sale of key public education sites.

Public Education: A Privatised Future?

Greens MPs joined with the NSW Teachers Federation and the Parents and Citizens to condemn the Carr government's latest privatisation venture: the building, ownership and operation of new public school buildings. In a move that would be better suited to Coalition ideology, the Carr government is pushing ahead with its plan to hand over new public school sites to the private sector. The Greens will continue to campaign to keep all public schools public.

NSW Govt hits log jams

Logging on private land

The Greens supported the withdrawal of the conservation movement from a NSW government working party established to set standards for native forest logging on private property. This was one of those Mickey Mouse consultation exercises designed to tie up those committed to positive environmental outcomes. Country Labor is in competition with the National Party and so they are pushing the Carr government to support an increase in logging on private property. If the Premier stumbles on this issue his environmental credentials will be heavily dented.

Save Jilliby

The campaign to save Jilliby, 14,066 hectares in the southeast of the Watagan Mountains, is at a critical stage. Logging in the Jilliby Reserve started illegally in May, and since then serious breaches in logging licence conditions have been documented by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Greens are calling for the NPWS to follow through with prosecutions. Jilliby is the source of clean water for the Central Coast and is critical to the survival of at least five forest ecosystems

Western NSW National Parks

The Greens are backing a win-win plan for jobs and the environment in western NSW by supporting the creation of two new National Parks. A proposal for a national park at Goonoo and another at Pillaga would create a considerable number of jobs in direct park management, nature based tourism and interpretation facilities. The exceptional woodland areas stretching north from Wellington to Mt Kaputar represent the forest ecosystems that once dominated this state. The creation of new national parks is the only way to protect these ecosystems. While the Labor government sits on its hands logging is causing irreversible damage to this region.

Euthanasia Bill

Ian Cohen's "Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill" was debated in the Legislative Council in March. Unfortunately a majority of MPs showed that they are out of step with community wishes on this issue. The Bill would have given suffering, terminally ill individuals in strictly controlled circumstances the right to avoid days of agony and loss of dignity. Ian has foreshadowed that he will again introduce a Greens Bill as 70% of the population have indicated support for voluntary euthanasia legislation.

Mogo madness

The campaign to stop the Mogo Charcoal Plant has been one of the success stories of 2002. Mobilising wide support from the south coast to Sydney the Carr government has been put on notice that the era of government sponsored environmental vandalism must end. If the plant was put into operation it would consume a massive 200,000 tonnes of south-east forest timber annually for the next 20 years.

As a result of a motion moved by Ian Cohen and passed by the Legislative Council the government was forced to release a raft of previously secret charcoal plant related documents. Included amongst the boxes of documents were emails from a staffer of the Treasurer, which contained damning evidence that the Minister for Forestry had lied about the poisoning of trees in state forests.

Earlier in the year the Greens had asked the Minister about this practice related to preparing wood for charcoal production and he had said it had ended in October. The emails make fascinating reading as they acknowledge that not only did the practice continue past October but also that State Forests knew that they had given incorrect information to the Parliament.

Labor & Coalition back hunting legislation

After months of intense campaigning by the Greens and environment and animal rights groups to have the Game Bill defeated, the government and opposition won the day.

This highly offensive piece of legislation hands over the regulation of hunting to a Game Council stacked with representatives of hunting organisations.

Tragically this legislation will result in extraordinary levels of animal cruelty in this state, and will bring international embarrassment to Australia. The actions of the NSW government in wanting to cater to a minority of shooters and hunters stands in sharp contrast to that of the British government which earlier this year moved to outlaw fox hunting.

The Carr government's strategy in introducing this backward legislation is to capture conservative rural votes.

Public Liability - Insurers win Round 1

Greens MPs led the opposition to the Carr gov't's changes to public liability laws, while the Coalition sat on its hands. These "reforms" were ostensibly designed to address the crisis in ballooning insurance premiums. In reality they significantly reduced the rights of the injured whilst gifting massive windfall profits to the insurance companies.

During the debate, the Insurance Council of Australia quietly predicted a 10 to 12% decline in premiums. For a community group that had seen its premiums increase many fold, this would have had no effect at all. In reality premiums have continued to rise even after the changes.

The Greens sought to delete the retrospective action of the legislation, to create fairer and more reasonable thresholds and payouts, to force the government to maintain and make public accurate data on claims and payouts, and to ensure fair access to legal representation. As it did during the workers compensation debate, the Coalition, having made all the right noises outside Parliament, joined with the government to make sure that the insurance companies kept their massive profits.

Labor tweaks developer greed

The Carr gov't introduced two pieces of legislation designed to soothe community disquiet over inappropriate development. One Bill, supposedly designed to reform the Land and Environment Court, completely failed to address the Court's notorious bias towards developers. The other Bill was a rushed attempt to deal with development consents obtained by corrupt practises. Greens amendments to close the loopholes, to ensure that the Court is fair and impartial and to

further curtail corrupt practices failed to win support from either the government or the opposition.

No rainforest formply campaign

The Greens, the Wilderness Society and CFMEU Construction have launched a joint campaign to stop rainforest timber being used in formply, a disposable material used once or twice to mould concrete. We have called on the Premier and Prime Minister to make sure that government building sites use only sustainably-produced Australian formply, with no rainforest component. Most of the rainforest formply comes in from south-east Asia. The Indonesian Forum for Environment has welcomed our initiative.

Cannabis law reform

Summerland Greens hosted a successful launch in Lismore of Lee Rhiannon's "Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Cannabis Harm Minimisation) Bill 2002". After more than two years of consultation and policy updates we are keen to have this Bill come up for debate. Every sniffer dog patrol highlights how bankrupt the Labor government is on justice issues.

Nuclear free flotilla

In July Ian Cohen joined the Nuclear Free Flotilla to protest against the controversial shipment of deadly nuclear waste from Japan to England via the Pacific. The destroyer HMS Nottingham that ran aground on rocks off Lord Howe Island was rumoured to be in the region to block the flotilla and protect the shipment of the 255 kilograms of weapons-usable nuclear material. As this newsletter was being finalised Ian and the rest of the protesters were heading out to sea to meet the nuclear shipments.

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