

# Open letter from Philanthropy Electoral Act Changes

Public policy development and advocacy for a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable country is at serious risk.

Contributions to public debate from charities and philanthropy around public policy is under serious threat as a result of the proposed *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017* (the Bill).

Intended or otherwise, the consequences of the Bill are far reaching and will suffocate policy development and public advocacy, both of which are central to a healthy democracy.

Philanthropy Australia is the peak body for philanthropy. Our members comprise Australia's leading philanthropists, trusts, foundations and social change organisations. While we support the central purpose of the Bill, which is improved regulation of foreign donations to political parties, we urge that the Bill be withdrawn and redrafted.

The Bill conflates political campaigning and issue advocacy.

If this Bill becomes law, many charities as well as their major donors are likely to come within the scope of these new electoral laws.

Key parts of our civil society, including charities, philanthropies and donors, will be defined as political actors rather than advocates for the long-term public good and health of our democracy.

In addition, the Bill as it stands, will impose a massive increase in regulatory compliance and red tape on charities and philanthropy. It will simply suffocate the organisations that we all rely on to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities across Australia.

We must maintain the right and opportunity for the thoughtful exchange of ideas around new solutions to entrenched or emerging social, health, education and environmental challenges, free from the lens of political partisanship.

We call on the Government to withdraw and redraft the Bill to focus on legitimately restricting undue foreign influence on our political parties. We must let philanthropy and charities continue their vital role which includes public advocacy on policy issues which shape our nation.

The logo for Philanthropy Australia features a large blue square with the words "philanthropy" and "australia" in white lowercase letters. This square is set against a background of two overlapping triangles: a red one pointing upwards and a blue one pointing downwards, creating a diamond-like shape.

philanthropy  
australia

## Open Letter Signatories

1. Amanda Miller
2. Annie Duncan
3. Australian Communities Foundation
4. Australian Community Philanthropy
5. Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network
6. Australian Social Investment Trust
7. Australian Women Donors Network
8. The Balnaves Foundation
9. Barr Family Foundation
10. Besen Family Foundation
11. CAGES Foundation
12. The Caledonia Foundation
13. The CASS Foundation
14. The Cubit Family Foundation
15. Debbie Dadon AM
16. Dusseldorp Forum
17. English Family Foundation
18. Fairer Futures Fund
19. Fay Fuller Foundation
20. Frank Mahlab and Eve Mahlab AO
21. Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal
22. George Hicks Foundation
23. Give Where You Live Foundation
24. Goodman Foundation
25. Greater Charitable Foundation
26. Hantomeli Foundation
27. The Ian Potter Foundation
28. Inner North Community Foundation
29. Jaramas Foundation
30. Jim Phillipson
31. Jo Norman
32. The Keir Foundation
33. Kristin Stegley OAM
34. The Lenko Family Foundation
35. Letcombe Foundation
36. Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
37. Madden Sainsbury Foundation
38. McKinnon Family Foundation
39. McLeod Family Foundation
40. Minderoo Foundation
41. Mirboo North & District Community Foundation
42. Mornington Peninsula Foundation
43. The Mullum Trust
44. The Myer Foundation
45. Nelson Meers Foundation
46. Northern Rivers Community Foundation
47. Pace Foundation
48. Paddy Pallin Foundation
49. Partners For Equity
50. Peter McMullin
51. Planet Wheeler Foundation
52. The Reichstein Foundation
53. The R E Ross Trust
54. Robin Tedder
55. Ross Knowles Foundation
56. The Sidney Myer Fund
57. Susan McKinnon Foundation
58. The Sky Foundation
59. The Snow Foundation
60. Tracker Foundation
61. Trawalla Foundation
62. Victorian Women's Trust
63. The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation
64. W & A Johnson Family Foundation
65. The Walter Mangold Trust Fund
66. Wheelton Philanthropy