

MEDIA RELEASE

Vic parliament must restore political donation transparency before Nepean postal votes open in five days

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Wednesday's High Court decision on Victorian electoral funding means there's a gaping hole in Victoria's election funding laws, opening upcoming elections up to big and undisclosed donations, potentially influencing an upcoming by-election.

Postal votes for the Nepean by-election open on Wednesday, and a civil society campaign for strengthened democratic safeguards is calling on the Victorian Parliament to immediately close the transparency loophole.

"Australians deserve to know who is donating money to political candidates and parties vying for their votes and laws need to ensure a level playing field so that big money and foreign interests can't buy elections," Democracy Counts Campaign Director Tom Mooney said.

"The broad nature of the ruling means that anyone can now donate to a political party or candidate running in Victoria and they have absolutely no legal obligation to disclose that.

"With a by-election coming up, this seriously concerns us."

The unanimous High Court decision concerned "nominated entities" — which allowed major parties to channel funds through affiliated bodies while independents and minor parties had no equivalent access.

With the entire section of the *Victorian Electoral Act* that deals with campaign donations and public funding for candidates now invalid, Victoria has an opportunity to introduce replacement laws that reflect core democratic principles of fairness, transparency and equal participation.

In the meantime, reinstating a legislated requirement for political donation disclosure would likely be simple and unopposed.

"Electoral funding laws are complicated, but there is a serious loophole that would be a relatively easy fix, and voters in Nepean urgently need the Victorian Parliament to close it.

"We appeal to the Government, Opposition and all parties to work together to ensure this loophole is closed urgently.



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“This is not about political point scoring, this is about trust in our democracy.”

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