



## ACCOUNTABILITY SPOKESPERSON

# IT MUST COME TO THIS Legislate for honesty

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**G**overnment advertising for party political purposes, truth in political advertising, a Parliamentary Code of Conduct and Jobs for the Boys are the focus issues of two progressive Private Member's Bills I tabled in the Senate during October.

The 'Charter of Political Honesty Bill 2000' and the 'Electoral Amendment (Political Honesty) Bill 2000' are a substantial commitment by the Australian Democrats to the principles of political honesty and accountability.

Public comment in newspapers, on radio and television reveal a striking level of distrust of Australian politicians. It is not enough for individual politicians to loudly declare their own integrity. Systemic distrust and electoral cynicism that is born of experience must be resolved with legislative solutions.

That is what my Bills offer to the Australian people and I urge the Federal Government to give them the green light.

Successive Coalition and Labor governments are guilty of using public funds to promote government policy in a party political manner.

Reports reveal the Coalition dipped into government coffers for more than \$400 million to promote the new tax system. The subsequent controversy regarding some of that expenditure has again highlighted the absolutely inadequate checks on any government's political advertising.

A solution is needed and the Australian Democrats believe it must be an independent, non-partisan check on government advertising in the form of a committee consisting of the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman and an advertising expert. Further, the regulation of honesty in political advertising should not be left to politicians and spin doctors.

It is remarkable that the law

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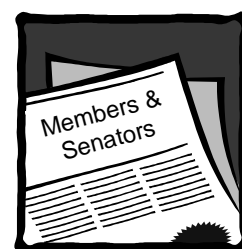
### End 'Jobs for the Boys'



### Demand truth in political advertising



### Call for a Code of Conduct





Senator Andrew Murray with Australian Democrats' Leader, Senator Meg Lees.

## Murray No.1 in WA

**A**ustralian Democrats' Leader, Senator Meg Lees recently congratulated Senator Andrew Murray on again winning Democrat preselection in Western Australia.

"It is clear Senator Murray's work in the areas of tax reform, workplace relations and accountability is held in high regard by party members in the WA Division," Senator Lees said.

"I look forward to Senator Murray waging a strong and successful campaign for the Australian Democrats at the next election," she concluded.



## THUMBS UP

*The Australian Democrats Senators and MLC's did not accept free tickets or corporate hospitality during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.*

*All Australian Democrat Parliamentarians who attended Olympic events purchased tickets along with the general public.*



## THUMBS DOWN

**T**he Federal Government should reduce petrol excise by 1.5 cents a litre to meet its election commitment that petrol taxes need not rise as a result of tax reform.

*The major changes in world petrol prices this year have made it doubly imperative that the Government is kept to its promise.*

*A promise is a promise and the Prime Minister should keep his.*



## THUMBS UP

**S**outh Australian Democrat MLC, Mike Elliot recently called on the Olsen Government to make Freedom of Information laws work "in the public interest."

*He said the government should embrace a Legislative Review Committee Report which recommends that a new FOI Act be introduced.*



**'The Democrats do not want to benefit from an industry that kills more than 18,000 Australians every year.'**

## Snuff out tobacco political donations

**T**he Australian Democrats are investigating legislative options to ban donations from the tobacco industry to political parties.

Democrats' Leader and Health Spokesperson, Senator Meg Lees, said the Australian public needed to be sure that politics was free from



the influence of the powerful tobacco lobby.

"The major parties accept hundreds of

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# AUDIT APPROVED

## Auditor-General to review entitlements

All Parliamentarians' and Ministers' expenditures and entitlements in the 1999 - 2000 financial year will be audited by the Auditor-General.

The Democrats welcome the Auditor-General's decision.

The genesis of the audit was a Democrats motion supported by the Federal Opposition and other non-Government Senators in the Senate on 2 November 2000.

Surprisingly, Howard Government Senators failed to support the motion.

The objectives of the audit are to review all Ministers' and Parliamentarians' expenditures and entitlements; to assess the administrative and control structures governing those expenditures and entitlements; and to identify opportunities

***'It is time to open the books ... then make the necessary changes to ensure politicians are fully accountable.'***

to improve the current framework.

The Auditor-General will report on the review to the Senate by 30 June 2001.

It is time to open the books, find the imprecise guidelines on entitlements and then make the necessary changes to ensure politicians are fully accountable.



**KEEN TO LEARN MORE?**

*If you would like a copy of the Australian Democrats Motion please contact the Office of Senator Murray on (08) 9481 1455 or by e-mail on [senator.murray@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.murray@aph.gov.au)*

## Revamp FOI Act

Commissioner will be appointed to audit Government agencies' use of the Freedom of Information Act with the adoption of my landmark Australian Democrats Private Member's Bill.

I tabled the Freedom of Information Amendment (Open Government) Bill on the 5 September.

A culture of secrecy exists in Australian government agencies. Consequently, Australian men and

women are being forced to use the FOI Act as the method of first resort - it should be the last resort.

Access to government information is a public right because it is in the public interest.


An independent FOI Commissioner is desperately needed in Australia. We must have a body that exists to audit government use of the FOI Act, as well as train and issue guidelines on the



Act's administration.

I also propose an end to the practice of quoting exorbitant FOI Act service fees to discourage applicants and the unnecessary exemption of certain information.

- Senator Murray



**'The time for a full audit of Federal and State Parliamentarians' salaries and allowances is well overdue.'**

## It must come to this : legislate for honesty

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still permits people to be elected to office on the strength of fraudulent political advertising. Experience teaches us that only the force of law ensures reasonable standards of truthfulness.

The Charter of Political Honesty Bill 2000 again presents to the government the Democrats' long-standing policy requiring the creation of a Code of Conduct for Ministers and Mem-

bers of Parliament that is enforced by a Commissioner for Ministerial and Parliamentary Ethics.

The final focus of the Bill is to stop the phenomenon of 'parachuting' mates of a government into lucrative positions on boards and authorities.

'Jobs for the Boys' should be an anachronism in 2000. Appointments must be based on merit, be transparent and

accountable and this is why I seek to have the proposed Commissioner for Ministerial and Parliamentary Ethics determine a Code of Conduct for the making of appointments by ministers. If passed, these Bills will implement accountability reform that is desperately needed to help restore public faith in Australian politicians.

If these Bills are rejected, it will expose the moral corruption behind the political rhetoric.

- *If you would like a copy of the two Private Member's Bills please contact my office on (08) 9481 1455 .*

## Ethics required

**T**he Democrats believe ethics must be applied to the administration of Members' and Senators' entitlements and allowances in the absence of precise guidelines, a Code of Conduct or a Commissioner for Parliamentary Ethics.

**Liberal Senator Chris Ellison, Special Minister of State, does not agree.**

Read on ...

The following article extract appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald column, "Kooka" on 14 October 2000

... One day this week, as the Reith scandal snowballed, Democrat Senator Andrew Murray asked Ellison about his administration of those



Senator Chris Ellison

*perks, but made the mistake of mentioning ethics.*

*Here is part of Ellison's response: "Senator Murray has also alluded to the question of ethics and the administration of those ethics. That does not come within my portfolio. I deal with parliamentary entitlements and the administration of the electoral offices of members and senators, which does not in anyway involve the question of ethics or any code of conduct." How true.*

## Snuff out tobacco political donations

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thousands in donations from the tobacco industry every year," Senator Lees said.

"In stark contrast, the Democrats have a long standing policy not to accept donations from tobacco companies.

"In 1998 / 99 the Labor Party received \$126,560 and the Coalition \$139,050 from two major producers of tobacco products.

"The Democrats do not

want to benefit from an industry that kills more than 18,000 Australians annually.

"We would of course prefer that the Coalition and Labor parties followed the lead of the Democrats in refusing donations from the tobacco industry.

"However, if the major parties fail to do so, the Democrats will do what we can to ban political donations from the industry," she concluded.

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