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QUICK GUIDE

RESEARCH PAPER SERIES, 2018–19

UPDATED 28 NOVEMBER 2018

Election funding and disclosure in Australian states and territories: a quick guide

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This Quick Guide summarises the often complex funding and disclosure laws federally, and in each Australian state and territory, for the purpose of comparison. These are the laws that regulate who can make and receive political donations, how and when those donations must be disclosed, how much money political parties can spend for their election campaigns, and the amount of public money they receive to fund their election campaigns and general operations.

This document does not attempt to capture every nuance of each system, and is not a substitute for legal advice. The laws occasionally change, and the Guide only reflects the laws at the time of publication. Only laws covering state/territory and federal elections are considered.

While most relevant legislation refers to donations to political parties as ‘gifts’, the terms ‘donation’ and ‘gift’ are used interchangeably in this document reflecting their popular use. Gifts can take the form of money, but may also include the provision of goods or services for free such as providing rent-free accommodation. Volunteer labour is usually not considered to be a gift or regulated under these laws.

The analysis separates out donations and electoral expenditure, and public funding. Appendix A provides details of the regulatory settings and thresholds for each jurisdiction, and Appendix B provides a short comparative summary of the main features of the law in each jurisdiction and a link to the relevant legislation. Indexed amounts are per the last advice published by the relevant electoral commission.

The quick guide has been updated to reflect new legislation in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and at the federal level since the November 2017 version.

Donations and electoral expenditure

Federal¹

The disclosure threshold, the amount over which donations must be disclosed, under the [Commonwealth Electoral Act](#) 1918 is Consumer Price Index (CPI)-indexed and from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 is **\$13,800**.

[Annual returns](#) must be lodged with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) by political parties, their state and territory branches and [associated entities](#)² showing the details of amounts received and outstanding debts that are over the disclosure threshold, and total values of receipts, payments and debts. Political campaigners (a

1. This section includes the provisions of the *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Act 2018*, which at the time of publication has passed but not come into effect. It is expected to be in effect before the 2019 federal election.

2. [Associated entities](#) are organisations that are controlled by, operated for, or have voting rights or are financial members of a political party.

new category of entity consisting of individuals and organisations who incur substantial amounts of electoral expenditure and who aren't parties or candidates) and associated entities must register with the AEC.

For amounts that are received above the disclosure threshold, returns must disclose the full name and address of the donor, the amount received, and whether the receipt is a 'donation' or 'other receipt'.³ [People and organisations](#) who make donations to candidates or parties in excess of the disclosure threshold must also submit an annual donor return. Donations from foreign donors of \$1,000 or more are banned.

Third parties (who spend more than \$13,800 but not enough to register as a political campaigner) must also lodge an annual return if they spend more than the disclosure threshold in a financial year. The returns must list their total political expenditure, total donations used for political expenditure, and details of donors whose donations were used in whole or part for political expenditure and were above the disclosure threshold.

Independent candidates,⁴ unendorsed Senate groups and Senate groups endorsed by more than one political party must submit an election return outlining the total value of donations received, the number of donors, any individual donation that is above the disclosure threshold, and electoral expenditure incurred between the issue of the writ and election day. Endorsed candidates are covered by their party's annual return.

Annual returns are published by the AEC [on its website](#) at the beginning of February for the previous financial year. The AEC undertakes a range of compliance reviews to ensure the accuracy of political parties' returns. These occasionally result in amended returns, but the AEC [rarely employs the coercive powers](#) it has in relation to compliance or initiates prosecutions in relation to funding and disclosure obligations.

New South Wales

On 2 July 2018 the new [Electoral Funding Act 2018](#) (NSW) replaced the [Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981](#) (NSW), which changed only some elements of the NSW political finance scheme.

Political parties, associated entities, candidates, groups and third-party campaigners [must register](#) with the NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) in order to accept political donations or incur electoral expenditure.

In NSW [political donations](#) are divided into 'small political donations', which are valued less than \$1,000, and 'reportable political donations', which are \$1,000 or more from a donor in one year. Loans of \$1,000 or more are also reportable. This includes donations made to political parties, associated entities, groups, third-party campaigners (only if used to incur political expenditure during the capped expenditure period) or a donation provided to another person who uses the money to make a political donation or incur electoral expenditure. Small political donations do not have to be disclosed by donors, however all donations must be disclosed by parties, groups, candidates and associated entities.

[Donations](#) can only be made by an individual on the electoral roll, a company with an Australian Business Number (ABN), or individuals who have identified themselves to the NSWEC.

Political donations are capped for a financial year and are adjusted annually for inflation. Multiple donations from the same donor to the same recipient are aggregated for the purpose of the caps. The caps vary for different recipients, and, for [1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019](#), range from \$6,300 for a political party to \$2,800 for candidates and third-party campaigners. Caps also apply for party membership subscriptions and affiliation fees. During an election period donations must be disclosed within 21 days and otherwise every six months by parties, candidates, groups and associated entities, and annually by donors.

Certain donations are [banned](#). These include anonymous donations over the reportable limit (\$1,000) and indirect donations of over \$1,000 in value (such as provision of free equipment or accommodation, or payment of another's electoral expenditure). Failure to record details of reportable donations or reportable loans is also prohibited. In addition, property developers, tobacco businesses, liquor or gambling businesses or their close associates are banned from making donations. In 2015 this ban was challenged and ruled to be constitutional by the High Court in [McCloy v New South Wales \[2015\] HCA 34](#).

3. Other receipts are any amounts received other than donations, including income from sales of goods or services, interest on bank accounts, and public funding.

4. Throughout this paper the term 'candidate' is used to mean a non-party or independent candidate, and 'group' is used to mean a group of non-party candidates who have chosen to be listed together, particularly on an upper house ballot paper.

[Electoral expenditure](#) must be reported by political parties, associated entities, elected members, groups, candidates and third-party campaigners annually. Electoral expenditure is capped from a period commencing 1 October in the year before an election and ending on polling day for NSW state elections.

The [caps for electoral expenditure](#) are indexed and vary depending on the entity. For the period of the 2019 state election, caps are \$10,499,700 for a party running candidates in all 93 Legislative Assembly districts, \$1,288,500 for independent groups in the Legislative Council, \$184,200 for independent candidates in a Legislative Assembly election, and \$500,000 for third-party campaigners registered prior to the capped expenditure period. Within the overall cap there is an additional per-seat cap for Legislative Assembly elections of \$61,500 for a party or \$24,700 for a third-party campaigner. Electoral expenditure for an associated entity is aggregated with the party with which the entity is associated for the purpose of the expenditure cap.

Political parties, elected members, candidates, groups and third-party campaigners are required to maintain a [campaign account](#). These accounts are used for receiving political donations and making electoral expenditure, and public funding is paid into the accounts. Expenditure must be [reported yearly, within 12 weeks of the end of the annual period](#).

The NSWEC is atypical in Australia in that it has been relatively active in pursuing breaches of funding and disclosure laws, such as fines for [not using campaign accounts](#), withholding public funding for [breaching expenditure caps](#), and a \$600,000 fine for [illegal donations from property developers](#). Its legislation allows it to withhold public funding in the event of a breach of campaign finance laws.

Victoria

Prior to [legislative change](#) to the [Electoral Act 2002](#) (Vic.) in late 2018, Victoria had particularly light regulation of political finance. The only requirement for political donation disclosure in Victoria was that political parties registered both in Victoria and federally must lodge a copy of their AEC annual return with the [Victorian Electoral Commission](#) (VEC), and that organisations holding licenses related to gambling could not make donations to a political party exceeding \$50,000 in a financial year (the specific restriction on gambling-related donations has been repealed).

The [new funding and disclosure regime](#) only permits donations from Australian citizens or residents and businesses with an ABN (however it does not require any proof that the donor is a permitted donor). Victoria imposes a [donation disclosure threshold](#) of \$1,000 (and bans anonymous donations of \$1,000 or more) and imposes a donation cap of \$4,000 for each election period (the time from one election to the next in four years' time). Donors may also not donate to more than six third-party campaigners (defined as third parties that spend more than \$4,000 of political expenditure in a financial year). These amounts are CPI-indexed annually.

Parties, candidates, associated entities and third-party campaigners must maintain a [state campaign account](#) which they must use to pay for political expenditure, and donations must be paid into these campaign accounts. Donations to associated entities and third-party campaigners that are not intended to be used for political expenditure, and are not paid into the campaign account, are not subject to the donation cap. For [associated entities](#) and [third-party campaigners](#), expenditure will only be political expenditure if it is incurred during the election campaigning period (from 1 October to 6pm on election day). As long as membership fees and affiliation fees to parties, third-party campaigners and associated entities are not paid into campaign accounts these fees are not subject to the donation cap.

Donors and recipients must disclose donations within 21 days, and the donations will be published by the VEC within seven days of being received. Parties, associated entities and third parties must also submit annual returns reporting donations over the threshold, total income and expenditures, and any outstanding debts.

The new funding and disclosure provisions come into effect after the November 2018 Victorian state election, and the legislation requires that the new provisions be reviewed within 12 months of the 2022 Victorian state election.

Queensland

Changes to the Queensland [Electoral Act 1992](#) in February 2017 set the disclosure threshold for gifts and loans at [\\$1,000](#), and imposed a requirement on political parties and candidates to declare any reportable gifts or loans within seven days throughout the year (that is, not just during an election period). The change to the disclosure cap was made retrospective, reversing the \$13,000 disclosure cap which had applied in the lead-up to the 2015 election.

In addition, election returns are required within 15 weeks after the election from candidates and parties listing the total amount of all gifts and fundraising contributions, the number of donors, total loans and number of entities making the loans, and the electoral expenditure.

The disclosure period for a candidate who contested the previous election runs from 30 days after the polling day at the previous election to 30 days after polling day for the current election. For all other candidates the disclosure period begins either when they announce their candidature or are preselected by their party, and ends 30 days after the election.

It is unlawful for a candidate or party to receive a gift of foreign property (including, but not limited to, money). Unless the gift is returned within six weeks an amount equal to the amount of the value of the gift will be payable to the State. It is unlawful for a candidate to receive more than \$200, or a political party more than \$1,000, from an anonymous donor, or any gift where the real identity of the donor is obscured by paying through an accountant or lawyer. As of [2 October 2017](#) donations from property developers and property developer industry bodies are banned, as [announced by the Queensland Premier](#) prior to the November 2017 state election.

Any amount over \$200 contributed to a fundraising effort, such as attendance at a dinner or payment for a raffle ticket, constitutes a gift, and if a single individual makes such contributions of \$1,200 or more it must be declared within seven days.

In Queensland state elections third parties, whether they are individuals or organisations, who incur expenditure of more than \$1,000 advocating voting for or against a party or candidate or drawing attention to a particular issue, must also provide a return to the [Electoral Commission of Queensland](#) (ECQ) reporting all gifts, gifts in kind, and fundraising contributions. Individuals or organisations who donate a total of \$1,000 or more to candidates or parties must also submit a return to the ECQ. Donors fall under these third party disclosure requirements and are not covered by a separate donor return requirement.

All returns are made public by the ECQ and are available on the [Commission's disclosures website](#), and must be accompanied by an auditor's certification. ECQ is the first Australian electoral commission to use visualisations of donation data to help illustrate the source of the donations.

The retrospective reduction of the disclosure cap to before the 2015 state election resulted in the ECQ taking legal action against the [Liberal National Party](#) to disclose donations made prior to the election. The [Queensland Supreme Court](#) upheld the legislation.

South Australia

Under the [Electoral Act 1985](#) (SA) Political parties, candidates and third parties must create a designated campaign account for election campaigns. All donations must be paid into the account and all political expenditure must be made from the account. Associated entities are not required to maintain a campaign account.

All donations, gifts and loans over the threshold (currently \$5,310, [indexed](#)) must be disclosed by [political parties](#), [candidates](#), [associated entities](#) and [third-party campaigners to the Electoral Commission SA](#), and they must also record information about gifts of \$200 or more and loans of \$1,000 or more. [Donors](#) must also declare gifts over \$5,310.

'Gift' is defined broadly, and includes money (other than party subscription fees) and services (excluding volunteer labour). Donation amounts and who is able to donate are not restricted. Raising money through political access, such as meals with members of parliament and candidates, is not prohibited, but tickets to such events are capped at [\\$500 per person](#).

The disclosure scheme involves [two reporting cycles](#) for recipients of donations. Outside an election period donation disclosure reports are required half-yearly. However from 1 January in an election year returns are required by 5 February and thereafter on a weekly basis until 30 days after election day. Returns must be accompanied by an audit certificate. Donors must also submit [half-yearly](#) returns.

Western Australia

Political parties, associated entities, candidates and groups are required to submit both annual and election returns to the [Western Australian Electoral Commission](#) (WAEC) under the [Electoral Act 1907](#) (WA). The requirements of the returns are different for parties, candidates and groups, and third parties that incur

electoral expenditure. The returns can be [searched online](#) and form the basis for an annual [political finance report published by the WAEC](#).

[Annual returns](#) for parties and associated entities must include the value of all gifts and income received during the financial year, and the details of all gifts of more than the 'specified amount' (as determined by the Electoral Commissioner, currently \$2,500) and the details of donors who make gifts of a total value of \$2,500 or more. Anonymous gifts of \$2,500 or more are banned.

Election returns are lodged after an election or by-election and must include details of specified electoral expenditure by parties, candidates and third parties. Electoral expenditure must be disclosed for specified categories of spending, such as broadcasting advertisements, publishing advertisements, producing material, consultant's fees and opinion polling. Electoral expenditure incurred producing advertising for use during an election period (from the issue of the writ to the end of polling day) must be disclosed regardless of whether the expense is incurred during the election period.

Candidates and groups must also disclose all election-related gifts received during the disclosure period (31 days after polling day of the previous election until polling day) of \$2,500 or more. The disclosure period begins one month after the previous election for candidates who were candidates in the previous election, or one year before the day of nomination for new candidates.

Third-parties who incur \$500 or more of electoral expenditure during the disclosure period must also complete an election return with the details of gifts of more than \$2,500 that were used partially or wholly for electoral expenditure.

Tasmania

There is no state legislation concerning disclosure of gifts to political parties, but all parties registered federally must [lodge an annual return](#) with the AEC showing relevant receipts and expenditure.

Under the [Electoral Act 2004](#) (Tas.) [candidates for the Legislative Council](#) have an indexed expenditure limit (\$16,500 in 2018) and must file returns of their electoral expenditure with the [Tasmanian Electoral Commission](#). Political parties must not incur expenditure in relation to Legislative Council elections.

In May 2018, following the 2018 state election, Premier Will Hodgman announced the government would undertake a [review of Tasmania's political finance laws](#), with an interim report expected around the end of 2018 and the final report six months later.

Australian Capital Territory

Under the [Electoral Act 1992](#) (ACT) donations from a single individual or entity that collectively exceed \$1,000 are required to be disclosed, along with the name and address of the donor, to the [ACT Electoral Commission](#). This applies to gifts received by parties, associated entities, and non-party candidates. Previously the ACT had a cap on donations of \$10,000 per financial year, however this was [repealed in 2015](#).

Annual returns for registered parties, non-party members of the ACT Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and associated entities must list the total received for the financial year, the name and address of all donors who donate a total of \$1,000 or more, whether the donation was a gift, gift-in-kind or other payment, the total amount of electoral expenditure during the year, the total debts outstanding at the end of the financial year, and the names and address of any person or organisation owed more than \$1,000 at the end of the financial year, and amount owed.

In an election year there are [additional disclosure periods](#). Donations that reach the \$1,000 threshold between 1 April and 30 June must be declared by 7 July. Donations that reach that threshold between 1 July and the end of the polling day must be declared within seven days.

Election returns must be submitted by parties, non-party MLAs, non-party candidate groups, associated entities and third-party campaigners listing electoral expenditure on specific items where the expenditure occurs during the capped expenditure period, starting on 1 January of an election year. Third-party campaigners must also submit a return detailing the total of all gifts received and the details of all gifts of \$1,000 or more, with the name and address of the donor and the date of receipt.

Electoral expenditure caps of \$40,000 applied per candidate (up to a maximum of 25 candidates per party) at the 2016 election, indexed annually thereafter. The same caps also apply per third-party campaigner and associated entity.

In 2013 the Law Society of the ACT and the Australian Home Heating Association were found to have [breached electoral expenditure caps](#) by \$600 and \$700 respectively for the 2012 ACT election. At the 2016 election UFU ACT, Trades Hall Building and Clubs ACT [overspent the cap](#). The ACT Electoral Commissioner noted to a [Legislative Assembly committee](#) that the breaches were not a criminal matter but were a debt to the ACT of twice the amount by which the caps were exceeded.

Northern Territory

Under the [Electoral Act](#) (NT) election and annual returns to the [NT Electoral Commission](#) are required. [Registered political parties](#) must lodge annual returns of receipts, payments, outstanding liabilities and capital contributions. The returns must detail the total amounts paid and received in the year and the outstanding debts at the end of the year, details of any donors who donated or loaned \$1,500 or more, and in-kind goods or services that were free or below market value (except volunteer work). Anonymous donations of more than \$1,000 are illegal. [Associated entities](#) have similar reporting requirements to political parties.

[Candidates](#) must lodge an election return detailing the total gifts and the details of gifts of more than \$200, in-kind and free goods and services, loans of more than \$1,500 and details of all expenditure according to categories (broadcasting, publishing, display advertising, campaign material, direct mailing, opinion polling/research). Candidates endorsed by parties must lodge a return (however donations and expenditures are reported by the party and not the candidate).

[Donors](#) must lodge annual returns showing donations of \$1,500 or more and election returns of donations totalling \$200 or more to a candidate or \$1,000 or more to a party.

[Broadcasters and publishers](#) must lodge a return after each election with the details of all electoral advertisements broadcast or published during an election or by-election where the total for all broadcasts or publishing is \$1,000 or more. The NT is the only jurisdiction that imposes reporting requirements on broadcasters and publishers.

In December 2016 the Legislative Assembly resolved to [conduct an inquiry](#) into options for reforming the NT's political finance regime. The [Final Report](#) of this inquiry was delivered in June 2018 and recommended expenditure caps, donation caps and a public funding scheme. The government has not yet responded to the report.

Public funding

Two classes of public funding exist across the federal and state electoral environments. The most common is what is often referred to as 'election funding' or simply 'public funding', and involves post-election payments of an amount based on the number of votes received, possibly capped to the amount of expenditure incurred at the election. The second, 'administrative funding' or 'policy development funding', is money paid to political parties or candidates outside the election period to support parties' routine operations.

Federal

Public funding is available for candidates and parties in federal elections who receive more than four per cent of the total vote in their electorate. The amount is CPI-indexed and calculated every six months. Currently the amount is [\\$2.74](#) per formal first preference vote (1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018).

Public funding for eligible candidates and parties of a fixed amount of \$10,000 is paid automatically and any additional public funding, up to the per-vote cap, requires a claim based on electoral expenditure. Administrative funding does not operate in the federal electoral system.

New South Wales

NSW operates three separate public funding schemes in relation to state elections.

Election campaigns fund

The [election campaigns fund](#) is a reimbursement scheme for electoral expenditure capped at a per-vote rate (and the expenditure cap). Candidates and political parties are eligible for the election campaigns fund if they receive four per cent of the first preference vote or have a candidate elected. A claim for payment must be made within 120 days of the return of the writ for the election and requires receipts to certify the expenditure, and claims may be audited by the NSWEC.

Parties are eligible to receive an advance payment equal to 50 per cent of the rate the party was entitled to claim at the previous state general election, which is deducted from the claimed amount after the election, and may have to be repaid if the party does not obtain enough votes to entitle the party to that amount.

Parties are entitled to \$4 per first preference vote in the Legislative Assembly plus \$3 per first preference vote in the Legislative Council. Candidates are entitled to \$4 per first preference vote in the Legislative Assembly and \$4.50 per vote in the Legislative Council.

Administration fund

[Administration funding](#) is paid to cover administrative and operating expenses incurred by political parties, paid quarterly, and the payment is based on how many elected members the party has and is only for the amount of expenditure incurred. In 2018 the maximum quarterly amounts payable under the administration fund are:

- \$87,500 if there is only one elected member endorsed by the party
- \$150,000 if there are only two elected members endorsed by the party
- \$187,500 if there are only three elected members endorsed by the party
- \$187,500 if there are more than three elected members endorsed by the party plus \$30,000 for each such member in excess of three up to a maximum of 22 members and
- \$56,450 for independent elected members.

New Parties Fund

The [New Parties Fund](#) is available for registered political parties for which policy development expenditure is incurred and who are not eligible to receive funding under the administration fund.

The indexed maximum amounts payable in 2018 are 63 cents for each first preference vote received by any candidate at the previous State election who was endorsed by the party, or \$12,300, whichever is the greater.

Victoria

Amendments to the Victorian [Electoral Act 2002](#) in July 2018 increased the per-vote public funding and implemented both administrative and policy development funding schemes for parties, seemingly modelled on the NSW approach. All funding amounts are CPI-indexed.

Candidates and political parties are eligible for public funding paid at \$6 per Legislative Assembly vote and \$3 per Legislative Council vote, up from [\\$1.668 per vote](#) (as of 31 October 2015, the last by-election for which the rate was published) where the candidate or party received more than four per cent of the first preference vote or are elected. Candidates and parties are required to submit a statement to the Victorian Electoral Commissioner as to the [amount of electoral expenditure incurred](#) in relation to the election and public funding is only payable up to the amount of election expenditure.

The administrative funding is paid quarterly to parties based on their representation in Parliament, and cannot be used for electoral expenditure or paid into a state campaign account. The rate is \$200,000 annually for independents and \$200,000 annually for the first candidate elected in a party, \$70,000 for the second candidate and \$35,000 for the third through 45th candidates. Recipients must provide a return, accompanied by an audit certificate, to the VEC annually stating whether they have incurred expenses more or less than the claimable amount, and if less repay the difference.

Policy development funding is available to registered political parties who are not eligible for either public funding or administrative funding, and is payable annually to the amount of \$1.00 per vote or \$25,000, whichever is greater. In order to claim the funding a party must submit an audited statement to the VEC that it has incurred spending to the eligible amount.

Queensland

Queensland state elections involve both per-vote public funding and policy development funding.

The election funding amount is calculated as an amount per formal first preference vote for political parties or candidates who receive more than six per cent of the total number of formal first preference votes. Currently the amount is [\\$3.14 for political parties and \\$1.57 for an individual candidate](#) as of September 2018 (CPI-indexed). If the electoral expenditure of the party or candidate is less than the amount calculated based on the number of votes, the lesser amount is paid.

[Policy development funding](#) is available each financial year to parties who were registered at the last state general election and have at least one elected member endorsed by the party for the financial year. The policy development funding is drawn from a pool of \$3m, and the share for each party is calculated on the basis of their proportion of the first preference vote gained by each endorsed candidate who received more than six per cent of the first preference vote.

South Australia

South Australia has a unique opt-in system whereby a political party or candidate can lodge a certificate to participate in the [public funding scheme](#). Those parties and candidates who elect to receive public funding are also subject to an expenditure cap, and payment of public funding cannot exceed the candidate or party's actual electoral expenditure.

The funding payable is:

- for a member of Parliament not endorsed by a registered political party at the dissolution of the Parliament, \$3.19 for each formal first preference vote
- for a candidate or group endorsed by a registered political party that has at least one member in either House at the dissolution of the Parliament, \$3.19 for each formal first preference vote and
- for all other candidates and groups not falling within the above two categories, \$3.72 for every formal first preference vote up to 10 per cent of the votes, and then \$3.19 for the remainder of the votes.

For the 2018 SA state election, the major political parties and many smaller parties contesting the election have [lodged a certificate to be included](#) in the public funding scheme.

SA also has a '[special assistance funding](#)' scheme for registered political parties that have at least one member of the party who is also a member of Parliament. The amount is paid half yearly and is for the administrative expenditure incurred by the party, up to:

- \$35,000 (indexed) in the case of a party with five or fewer members of Parliament or
- \$60,000 (indexed) in the case of a party with six or more members of Parliament.

The special assistance funding cannot be used for political expenditure.

Western Australia

Reimbursement of election expenditure is available for candidates and political parties contesting WA state elections provided that the candidate or party receives more than four per cent of the first preference vote. As of 1 July 2018, the indexed amount reimbursed is [\\$1.91 per valid first preference vote](#) up to the amount of the election expenditure. Administrative funding is not available for candidates and parties contesting WA state elections.

Tasmania

[Tasmania](#) does not operate a public funding scheme or administrative funding for state elections.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT provides public funding in respect of territory elections for political party candidates and ungrouped candidates at the rate of [\\$8.24 per first preference vote](#) (as of 30 June 2018, indexed by CPI). Ungrouped candidates are eligible for public funding if they achieve at least four per cent of the vote in the electorate, and party candidates are eligible if the party's candidates together receive at least four per cent of the vote in the electorate.

Parties and non-party candidates with representation in the ACT Legislative Assembly are eligible [for administrative funding](#) paid at an amount of \$5,581.16 per quarter for each member of the Assembly (MLA) (as of 2018, indexed yearly). If an MLA is in the Assembly for only part of the year then the amount is calculated based on the number of days the individual was an MLA.

Northern Territory

The NT does not have a public funding scheme or an administrative funding scheme, but candidates are still required to [report political expenditure](#) (political party candidates have their donations and spending reported by their party). As noted above, however, a 2018 report commissioned by the Government has recommended adopting a public funding scheme.

Appendix A: Election funding and disclosure settings

	Federal	NSW	Vic.	SA ^(a)	Qld	Tas. ^(b)	WA	ACT	NT
Gift disclosure threshold	\$13 800	\$1 000	\$1 000	\$5 191	\$1 000	✗	\$2 500	\$1 000	\$1 500
Loan disclosure threshold	\$13 800	\$1 000	\$1 000	\$5 191	\$1 000	✗	-	\$1 000	\$1 500
Threshold indexation	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	-	✓	✗	✗
Donation cap (to party)	✗	\$6 300	\$4 000	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Donation cap period	-	Yearly	4 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donor returns required	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Expenditure cap (max for party)	✗	~\$11m	✗	~\$4m	✗	✗	✗	\$1m	✗
Expenditure cap indexed	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Per seat expenditure cap	✗	\$61.5k	✗	\$100k	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Expenditure caps for third parties	✗	\$500k	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	\$40 000	✗
Expenditure caps for associated entities	✗	✓ ^(c)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	\$40 000	✗
Third-party campaigner returns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Anonymous donations threshold	\$1 000	\$1 000	\$1 000	\$200	\$1 000	✗	\$2 300	\$1 000	\$1 000
Banned donor industries	✗	✓ ^(d)	✗	✗	✓ ^(e)	✗	✗	✗	✗
Foreign donation restrictions	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Expenditure reporting	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Campaign account	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Per vote public funding	\$2.74	\$3/\$4 ^(f)	\$6.00	\$3.19	\$3.14	✗	\$1.91	\$8.24	✗
Public funding vote threshold	4%	4%	4%	4%	6%	-	4%	4%	-
Public funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✗	-

	Federal	NSW	Vic.	SA ^(a)	Qld	Tas. ^(b)	WA	ACT	NT
capped to expenditure									
Administrative funding (max)	✗	~\$3.4m	~1.8m	\$60 000	\$3m ^(g)	✗	✗	~\$533k ^(h)	✗
Other public funding sources	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Election donation reporting	✗	21 days	21 days	Weekly	✓	✗	✓ ⁽ⁱ⁾	Weekly	✓
Other reporting cycle	Annual	Half-yearly	Annual	Half-yearly	Half-yearly ^(j)	✗	Annual	Annual	Annual

Notes: As applicable to political parties. Rules for candidates or upper-house non-party groups may vary. Indexed amounts as per the date of publication or most recent amounts as published by the relevant electoral commission. The 'Federal' column includes recent provisions that have been legislated and will take effect before the next federal election.

(a) For parties that have opted into the SA public funding scheme.

(b) Tasmanian Legislative Assembly elections only. Different rules apply for Legislative Council elections.

(c) Expenditure of associated entities is aggregated with the party for which they are an associated entity for the purposes of the cap.

(d) Property developers, gambling, tobacco, liquor industries or persons closely associated.

(e) Property developers.

(f) \$4 per vote in the Legislative Assembly and \$3 per vote in the Legislative Council.

(g) Divided between eligible parties.

(h) An amount of \$21,322.64 per candidate.

(i) Gifts over the disclosure threshold at any time must be reported within seven days.

(j) Expenditure only.

Appendix B: Comparative overview of political financing regimes

	Federal	NSW	Vic.	SA	Qld	Tas.	WA	ACT	NT
Legislation	Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918	Electoral Funding Act 2018	Electoral Act 2002	Electoral Act 1985	Electoral Act 1992	Electoral Act 2004	Electoral Act 1907	Electoral Act 1992	Northern Territory Electoral Act
Public funding of election campaigns	Indexed amount per first preference vote. Threshold of 4% of primary votes needed. First \$10,000 of public funding paid automatically, with claim of expenditure required for any additional funding.	Indexed amount per first preference vote up to actual election expenditure incurred. Threshold of 4% of primary votes needed.	Indexed amount per first preference vote up to actual election expenditure incurred. Threshold of 4% of primary votes needed.	Opt-in public funding on a per vote basis. Candidates must receive at least 4% of the primary vote to be eligible for public funding. Those who opt-in to receive public funding are subject to an indexed expenditure cap.	Indexed amount of public funding per first preference vote up to the claimed electoral expenditure. Threshold of 6% of primary votes needed.	No public funding support.	Indexed amount per first preference vote up to actual election expenditure incurred. Threshold of 4% of primary votes needed.	Indexed amount per first preference vote paid automatically to candidate. There is no claims process. Threshold of 4% of primary votes needed.	No public funding of election campaigns
Public funding of parties' or candidates' activity	No public funding for administration or other organisational or policy development purposes.	Administration Fund based on the number of elected members, from \$87,500 (indexed annually) for one to \$187,500 for three plus \$30,000 for each of up to 22 additional members. Parties not eligible for Administration	Administrative funding paid annually at \$200,000 for elected independents and \$200,000 for the first party member, \$70,000 for second and \$35,000 for third to forty-fifth member. Cannot be used for	Political parties who have a Member of Parliament are eligible for up to \$7,000 or \$12,000 (indexed) half yearly, administrative funding, depending on the number of MPs, which cannot be used for political	A policy development funding pool of \$3,000,000 is available. A registered party's entitlement is calculated from their formal first preference votes of candidates who received more than 6% of the first preference vote.	No public funding for administration or other organisational or policy development purposes.	No public funding for administration or other organisational or policy development purposes.	Parties represented by an MLA and non-party MLAs are entitled to administrative funding of \$21,322.64 (from 2015, indexed each year) per calendar year for each MLA, paid quarterly.	No public funding for administration or other organisational or policy development purposes.

	Federal	NSW	Vic.	SA	Qld	Tas.	WA	ACT	NT
Public funding of parties' or candidates' activity (cont.)		Funding may be eligible for New Parties Funding of the greater of \$0.63 per vote or \$12,000.	electoral expenditure.	expenditure.					
Disclosure of donations	Details of donations over \$13,500 (indexed) must be disclosure by parties and their associated entities and donors annually, and by candidates in their election returns. Donations over \$1,000 from foreign donors are banned.	Parties and candidates disclose donations of \$1,000 or more. Donations to a political party are capped at \$6,300 and \$2,800 for a candidate (annually indexed). Only individuals on the electoral roll or organisations with an Australian Business Number can donate. Disclosures within 21 days in the pre-election period otherwise six monthly.	Donations of \$1,000 or more (indexed) at any time must be disclosed within 21 days by donors and recipients. Donation cap of \$4,000 from any one donor to any one recipient during a parliamentary term. Donations from foreign donors, or anonymous donations under \$1,000 are banned.	Donations, gifts and loans over \$5,000 (indexed) must be disclosed by political parties, candidates, associated entities and third party campaigners. Donors must declare gifts over \$5,000.	Donations or loans of \$1,000 or more must be declared within days and total donations, loans and electoral expenditure must be declared within 15 weeks of polling day. Third parties who incur electoral expenditure over \$1,000 must declare donations over \$1,000 within seven days. Foreign donations are banned.	No state-legislated provisions for disclosure.	All political parties and associated entities are required to disclose the value of all gifts and other income received. Gifts above \$2,300 must be detailed along with the details of donors. Anonymous donations above \$2,300 prohibited.	MLAs, registered parties and associated entities submit annual returns. Must disclose details of donations of \$1,000 or more. Parties, non-party candidates, associated entities and third party campaigners submit election returns listing expenditure incurred during the election period.	Parties must submit annual returns showing total amounts received and detailing gifts of \$1,500 or more. Donors of \$1,500 or more must submit returns. Candidates must disclose details of gifts of \$200 or more.
Disclosure of electoral expenditure	Parties and their associated entities must lodge annual	All electoral expenditure must be disclosed	Parties and candidates submit audited statement of	Parties or candidates that have incurred more than	Electoral expenditure returns must be submitted by	No state-legislated expenditure regulations for	Political parties, associated entities, candidates and	Registered parties must submit election returns detailing	Registered political parties must disclosure total amounts

	Federal	NSW	Vic.	SA	Qld	Tas.	WA	ACT	NT
	returns listing their total receipts, total payments and total debts. Candidates and unendorsed Senate groups must disclose electoral expenditure during the election period.	annually by parties, candidates, associated entities and third party campaigners. Electoral expenditure is capped for parties, associated entities (aggregated with the party's expenditure) and third parties during the election period.	expenditure within 20 weeks of election day.	\$5,000 (indexed) of political expenditure during a campaign period must lodge a political expenditure return.	parties, candidates and third parties, regardless of whether the spending is during the election period. Evidence of expenditure must be retained.	Assembly, but <i>parties</i> may not incur expenditure for Legislative Council elections. Council candidates must submit election returns and have an expenditure limit.	groups who incur expenditure for political purposes are required to disclose all gifts received and expenditure incurred for election purposes.	electoral expenditure during the election period. Expenditure is capped at \$40,000 per candidate.	paid each year. Candidates must detail all election expenditure by category. Publishers and broadcasters must lodge returns detailing electoral advertisements totalling more than \$1,000.

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