

Openness, accountability and the public's right to know are essential principles and protections in a democracy.

Accountability has been central to the work of the Australian Democrats in Federal Parliament for over 30 years and we have had many, many successes such as curbing secrecy in government contracts and initiating the first ever review of parliamentary entitlements.

The Labor Government has introduced some reforms since 2008 however much remains to be done to limit the excesses of the executive and the benefits of incumbency and to remove the corrupting influence of political party donations.

Our Plan

Political parties and donations

- Donations with 'strings attached and foreign donations banned and full disclosure of third party (clubs, trusts, etc.) donations
- A financial cap on all electoral and campaign funding, per political party and per candidate
- Standards for political party constitutions including rules for office bearer election, pre-selection of candidates, resolution of disputes and conflicts of interest and enshrining one-vote-one-value in ballots
- Oversight of key party balloting and investigation of allegations of breaches by the AEC

Codes of conduct

- Enforceable, statutory codes of conduct for ministers and their staff, developed by a joint committee of the parliament
- Ministerial staffers accountable to parliamentary committees in defined circumstances
- Establish the Office of Commissioner for Ministerial & Parliamentary Ethics

..... raising the bar on **Accountability**

- Measures to protect the impartiality of public service advice and diminish policy-making by spin-doctors, eg. clearly documented and transparent channels of communication between ministerial staff and the public service

Reform politicians' salaries and entitlements

- The Remuneration Tribunal to benchmark the resources parliamentarians require to do their job against relevant international standards and to conduct public hearings and any change agree by a vote of parliament
- Use of electorate allowances for election campaigns and non parliamentary purposes
- Tri-annual Audits by the Auditor General of the use of parliamentary entitlements
- Life Gold Passes eliminated, except for former prime ministers

'Jobs for the boys'

- Entrench merit-based appointments by spelling out skills and backgrounds required, the basis on which candidates are appointed and ruling out those who are politically affiliated except in limited circumstances
- Introduce a 2-year post-ministerial 'cooling-off' period

Reform FOI and minimise government secrecy

- Establish an independent FOI commissioner
- Widen the scope of information that can be accessed
- Create a fairer, more reasonable fee structure and reduce time limits for processing to 21 days
- Set up internal review systems and processes to audit agencies
- Eliminate ministerial discretion in favour of the AAT or the Courts to resolve disputes
- Oblige the Auditor General to report on compliance with the order to disclose details of contracts worth \$100,000+

Strengthen statutory **whistleblower protection** for corporations and extend to employees in the Commonwealth public sector and the not-for-profit sector and allow journalists to protect their sources from being named in cases of whistleblowing.

Tighten the rules on **government advertising**, removing ministerial power to override for 'emergencies' unless agreed by the Australian National Audit Office