

4 October 2017

Committee Secretary
Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By e-mail: politicaldonations.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

INQUIRY INTO THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF DONATIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Committee's Inquiry into the Political Influence of Donations.

The Property Council is the leading advocate for Australia's biggest industry – property. We represent owners, fund managers, superannuation trusts, developers and investors across all four quadrants of the property investment: debt, equity, public and private. The property sector represents one ninth of Australia's GDP (the largest of any sector) and employs 1.1 million Australians (more than mining and manufacturing combined).

As a high-profile advocacy body, the Property Council receives regular requests for donations from across the political spectrum, both state and federal – with the exception of NSW where donations are prohibited by law.

We have contributed to political parties in various forms over the years, primarily through the purchase of tickets to fundraising events. We have always strived to be apolitical in terms of our donations by not favoring one major party over another.

In October 2016 the Property Council made the decision to withdraw from all political donations and fundraisers, at all levels of government. A significant majority of Property Council members have also withdrawn from the practice of making political donations. (Plus, we note, the industry and our organisation are banned from doing so in NSW anyway.)

The key reason behind this decision is that political donations have no impact on the success of our advocacy work, which is sustained on the merits of our research and policy activities.

While the Property Council no longer donates to any political party, there are many sectors and interests that are impacted by government policy, regulation, tenders or subsidy, and the community should rightly expect that political donations do not distort government decision making in any area.

We believe that political donations regimes must be extremely transparent with appropriate and timely public reporting, and there must be appropriate penalties for any person who seeks to use donations to distort government decision making.

The Property Council is open to changes to political donation rules that will ensure that community confidence in our political system is strengthened, however these rules must apply uniformly to all businesses, environmental groups, community groups and unions.

We take the view that regardless of occupation or sector, all people should be treated equally under the law. Therefore, in the interest of community confidence, any political donations rules must apply uniformly to all, not just to some.

For further information, please contact Richard Lindsay, Manager – Government Relations on 02 6276 3664 or rlindsay@propertycouncil.com.au.

Yours sincerely



Ken Morrison
Chief Executive