

Money and power in South Australian elections

The effects of a donation ban on competitive elections

The proposed increase in public funding and restrictions on donations for South Australian elections would unfairly favour major parties and incumbents at the expense of competitive elections. A democracy voucher model of public funding would better meet the stated objectives behind the change, while also providing for fairer elections and empowering South Australian voters.

Submission

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The Australia Institute - Research that matters

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Summary

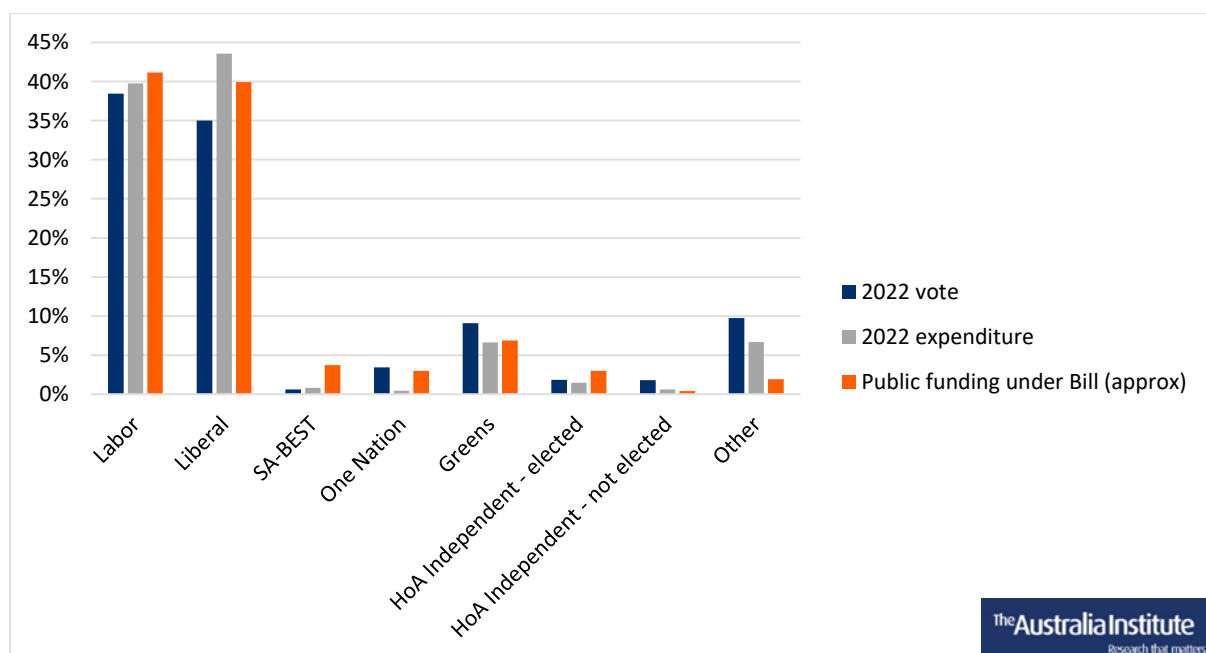
The cost of party and candidate campaigns in the 2022 South Australian election exceeded public funding by \$3.3 million. The shortfall was covered with private funding, including political donations.

The Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (“the Bill”) would increase public funding by about \$14 million per electoral cycle. This new funding would substitute for private funding both of election campaigns and of party administration. However, it would go overwhelmingly to the major parties. Sitting independent MPs and minor parties with parliamentary representation would also benefit.

This is because the public funding provisions in the Bill are based on the number of MPs a party has in the South Australian Parliament, rather than on the level of public support enjoyed by a given party or candidate, or on how many South Australians are party members.

If the Bill passed, independent candidates and minor parties that lack parliamentary representation would receive little or no public funding at all – and, in addition, they would be capped in how much private money they can raise. This would leave some minor parties in a situation where they would neither receive public funding nor be eligible for private funding, a “funding trap” that would make it impossible for them to operate.

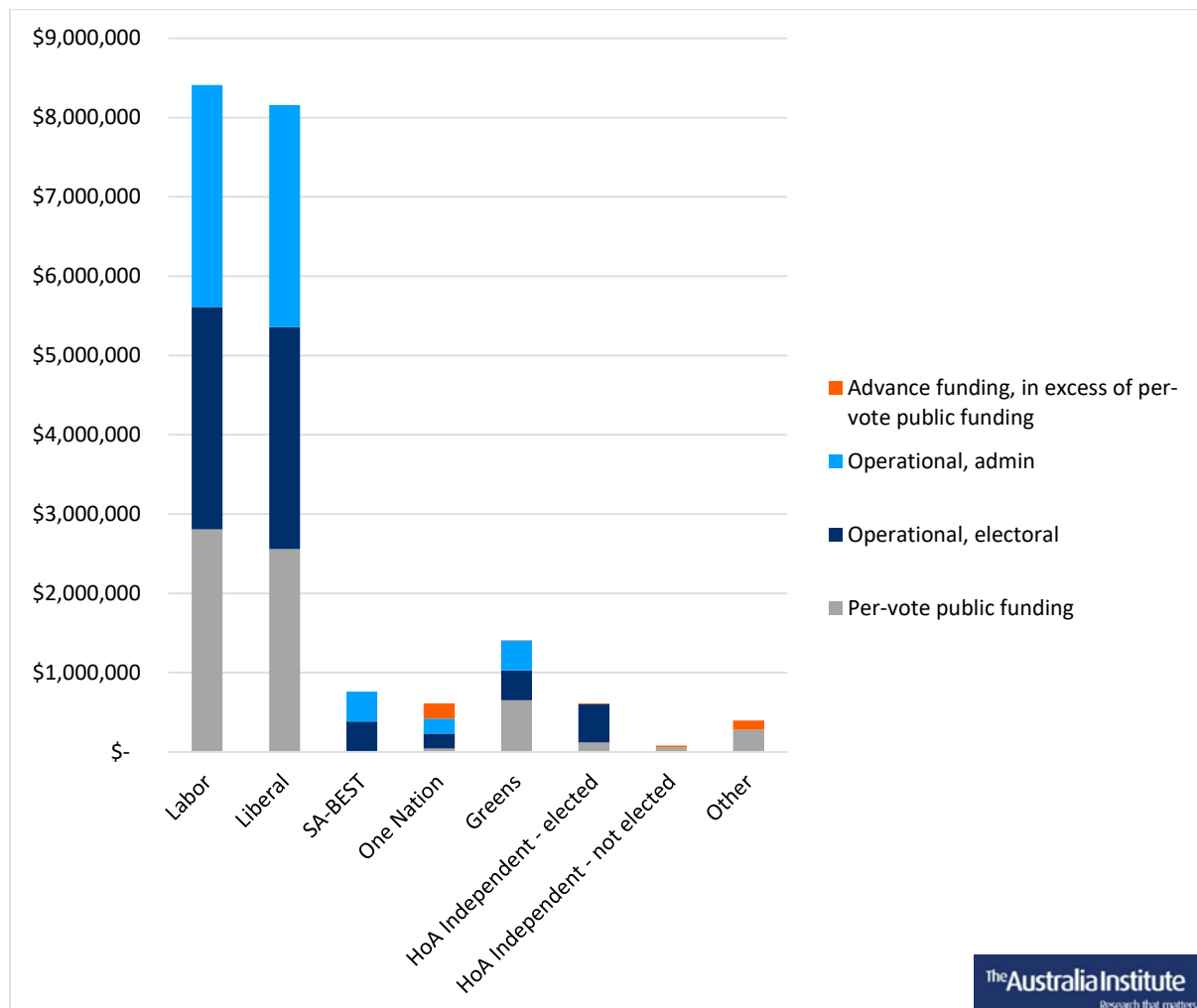
Figure: Share of 2022 vote, 2022 expenditure and public funding under the Bill



Note: Author’s calculations. See the appendix for more details.

Independent candidates for the House of Assembly (lower house) who are not sitting MPs and minor parties and Legislative Council (upper house) groups without parliamentary representation most obviously miss out under the Bill, even accounting for the Bill’s provision for advance funding for new entrants.

Figure: Approximate public funding per election cycle (if the Bill were legislated)



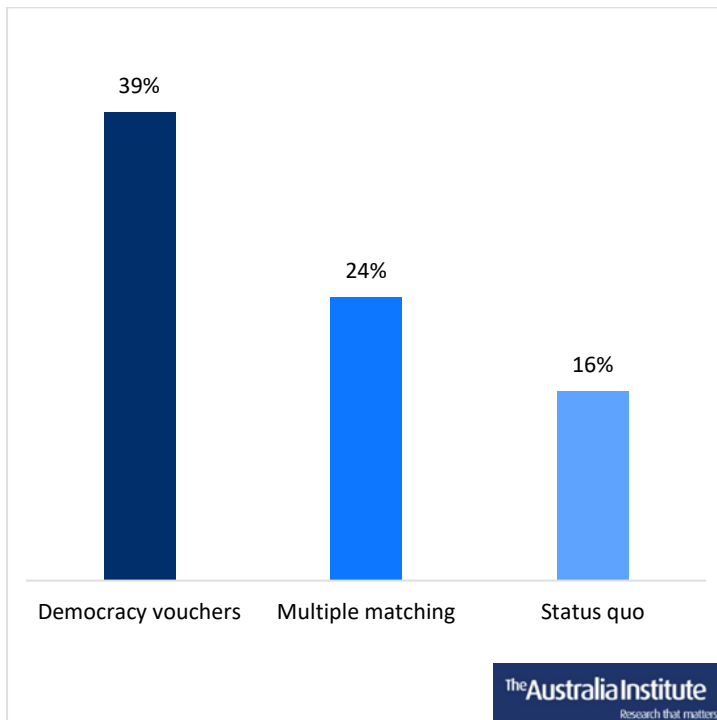
Note: Author’s calculations. See the appendix for more details.

Public money should always be spent carefully and proportionately, but this large increase in public funding been not been based on consultation with South Australians about what they expect from majority-publicly-funded political parties by way of governance, transparency or internal democratic processes.

An alternative public funding system, called “democracy vouchers”, could better achieve the Bill’s objective of removing private money from South Australian elections while also putting incumbents and new entrants on a level playing field; encouraging parties and candidates to engage with the public ahead of an election; and leaving it for the public to decide how much money is spent on public funding. Australia Institute polling research shows that

Australians would be much more likely to participate in a donation voucher scheme than to make a private donation to a political party.

Figure 1: Likelihood of participating at the next federal election, by funding model



Source: Australia Institute polling research.

There are also problems with the Bill’s limits on spending, which do not account for the advantages of incumbency. Further, the Bill would make spending caps mandatory for all candidates while not restricting third parties at all. The danger is that this means candidates could be incapable of countering expensive campaigns from third parties.

The Bill should not be passed in its current form.

Introduction

The Australia Institute welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation on the Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024. This submission builds on the Institute's existing research on political donations, campaign finance, truth in political advertising and the conduct of elections.¹

PRINCIPLES FOR FAIR POLITICAL FINANCE REFORM

In 2023, The Australia Institute identified nine principles for fair political finance reform.² It is with these principles in mind that we assess campaign finance rules.

The principles can be divided into two broad categories: those that deal with fairness for all candidates in/contributors to an election, and those that aim to ensure that any reforms are targeted and effective.

Fairness for all candidates and contributors

To ensure that all candidates and contributors are treated fairly, political finance reform should:

1. Give voters a range of choices about who represents them;
2. Not make it harder for new candidates to compete with incumbents;
3. Provide a level playing field regardless of whether candidates are members of a political party or independents;
4. Factor in the significant taxpayer-funded advantages of incumbency, with an eye to reducing disadvantages already faced by challengers; and
5. Account for spill over effects and economies of scale.

¹ See for example Browne (2019) *We can handle the truth: opportunities for truth in political advertising*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/we-can-handle-the-truth-opportunities-for-truth-in-political-advertising/>; (2024) *Submission - Review of the 2023 NSW election*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/submission-review-of-the-2023-nsw-election/>; Browne and Connolly (2023) *Submission: Money and power in Victorian elections*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/submission-money-and-power-in-victorian-elections/>; Browne and Shields (2022) *Fortifying Australian democracy: submission to the inquiry into the 2022 election*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/fortifying-australian-democracy/>; Morison and Browne (2023) *Submission: 2022 Victorian state election inquiry*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/submission-2022-victorian-state-election-inquiry/>

² Browne (2023) *Principles for fair political finance reform*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/principles-for-fair-political-finance-reform/>

Targeted and effective political finance reforms

For reforms to political finance to be targeted and effective, such reforms should:

6. Focus on those who most clearly threaten democracy and accountability;
7. Ensure that public funding is fit for purpose;
8. Strive for fairness and increased transparency; and
9. Distinguish between bona fide contributions and “cash for access”.

Public funding

Under the proposed South Australian laws, there would be three major sources of public funding: per-vote public funding, per-MP operational funding and advance payments to new entrants.

PROPOSED CHANGES

Per-vote public funding

Under current South Australian law, parties and candidates receive about \$3.80 per lower house and upper house vote received at each state election, provided the party or candidate wins 4% or more of the vote in a lower house seat or 2% or more in the upper house. The funding is capped at the party or candidate's actual political expenditure.³

For example, there are about 24,000 voters in each of South Australia's 47 lower house seats. A candidate who got 4% or more of those votes (about 960) would be entitled to about \$3.80 per vote, or about \$3,700 if they got just 960 votes. However, if they had only spent \$2,000 they would only receive that amount, not the full \$3,700.

There is a tapered system in place for independent candidates and candidates of parties without parliamentary representation. Votes for those candidates are worth \$4.40 per vote, up to 10% of voters in that seat. This is worth about \$1,500 extra for an eligible candidate receiving 10% (or more) of the vote.⁴

The Bill proposes two changes:

- Raising the vote threshold for public funding from 2% to 4% for candidates in the Legislative Council.⁵

³ SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, pp. 7–8, <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/electoral-reform>

⁴ The explanatory guide describes this tapered system as being in place for all parties and candidates, but that does not match the author's reading of the legislation: *Electoral Act 1985 (SA)*, sec.130P, <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=/c/a/electoral%20act%201985>; SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, pp. 7–8

⁵ SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, p. 13

- Providing advance payments of 60% of a party or candidate’s public funding entitlement from the previous election about eight months out from the next election, and a further 20% about one month out.⁶

For Legislative Council votes, the advance funding would be based on the result at the election before the previous election to account for the staggered terms that its members serve.

Advance funding for existing parties and candidates

The Bill would introduce advance funding for those who were eligible for public funding at the last election. Accepting advance payments would reduce one’s public funding allowance after the *next* election, but the value of the advance payment is calculated based on the *previous* election for the House of Assembly or the election before the previous election for the Legislative Council.

For example, the Labor Party received 436,000 lower house votes in 2022 and 304,000 upper house votes in 2018. At \$3.78 per vote, that is a notional amount of about \$2.8 million. Going into the 2026 election, the party could receive 60% of \$2.8 million (\$1.7 million) eight months out and 20% of \$2.8 million (\$0.6 million) one month out.

If, after the 2026 election, the Labor Party received the exact same number of votes they did in 2018 in the upper house and 2022 in the lower house, they would again be entitled to \$2.8 million. However, this sum would be reduced by the advance payments, so they would only receive \$0.6 million. If the party’s vote rose relative to previous elections, they would receive more money. If the party’s vote fell, they would receive less – perhaps as little as zero additional dollars if their vote decreased by more than 20%. They would not have to pay back any advance funding they were not “entitled” to.

To give another example, in 2018 SA-BEST received 203,000 upper house votes and in 2022 it received 2,000 lower house votes. If the Bill were in place for the 2026 election, SA-BEST would have a “notional” entitlement of about \$775,000, of which it could receive 80% in advance payments.

⁶ Technically, “upon commencement of the capped expenditure period” and “after the issue of the writs” respectively: SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, p. 15

Per-MP operational funding

Under current South Australian law, each party receives “special assistance funding” of \$88,000 per year total if it has five or fewer members of Parliament and \$151,000 per year total if it has six or more MPs. The sum is capped at the amount of actual administrative expenditure the party incurred and cannot be spent on political expenditure.⁷

The amount of special assistance funding is set by regulation, and in 2017 the minister more than quadrupled the amount. For example, it increased from \$24,000 to \$120,000 for a party with six or more MPs.⁸

Under the Bill, this special assistance funding would be replaced with “operational funding”, with a party receiving \$94,000 per MP per year, but no more than \$1.4 million per year however many MPs that party may have (\$5.6 million per four-year electoral cycle).⁹ Up to half of this so-called operational funding would be available for political expenditure.¹⁰

For the major parties, this would be a 50-fold increase in this form of public funding in less than 10 years.

Independent MPs, by contrast, would only receive \$30,000 each per year, but would be able to put the entire amount towards their next election campaign.¹¹

⁷ Electoral Commission SA (2023) *Special assistance funding*, <https://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au/parties-and-candidates/funding-and-disclosure-state-elections/special-assistance-funding>; *Electoral Act 1985* (SA), sec.130U; Electoral (Special Assistance Funding) Variation Regulations 2017, p. 1, [https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=/v/r/2017/electoral%20\(special%20assistance%20funding\)%20variation%20regulations%202017_189](https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=/v/r/2017/electoral%20(special%20assistance%20funding)%20variation%20regulations%202017_189)

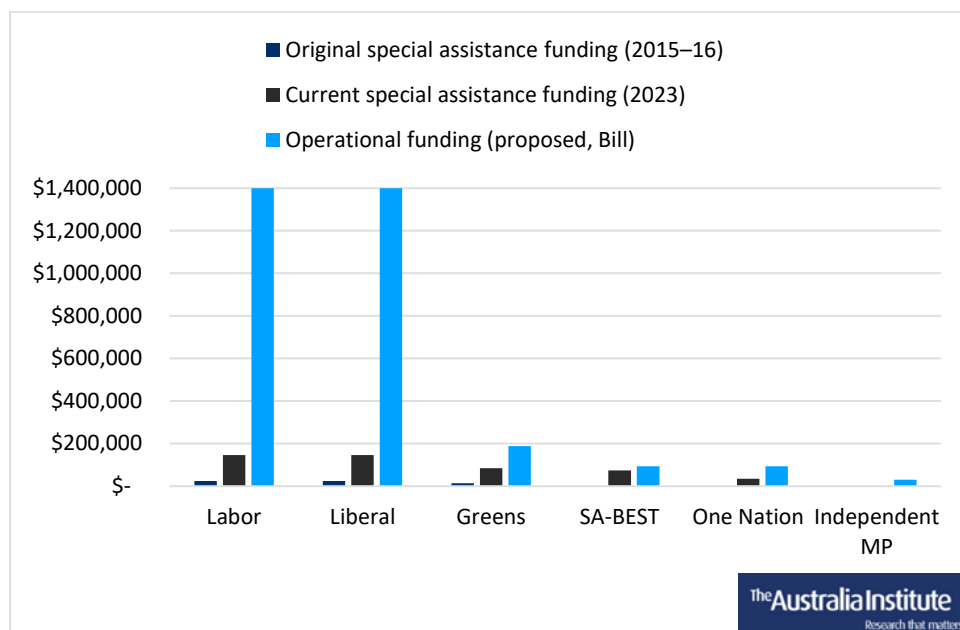
⁸ Electoral (Special Assistance Funding) Variation Regulations 2017 (SA), p. 1

⁹ Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), sec.20, <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/electoral-reform>

¹⁰ SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, pp. 14–15

¹¹ SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, pp. 14–15

Figure 2: Changes in annual special assistance funding and its proposed replacement



Note: Figures for 2015–16 and 2023 show actual funding claimed. SA-BEST and One Nation could presumably have claimed the same amount as the Greens did for the 2023 period had their party administration been sufficiently expensive.

Source: Electoral Commission SA (2023) *Special assistance funding*, <https://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au/parties-and-candidates/funding-and-disclosure-state-elections/special-assistance-funding>; *Electoral Act 1985 (SA)*, sec.130U, <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=/c/a/electoral%20act%201985>; Electoral (Special Assistance Funding) Variation Regulations 2017 (SA), p. 1, [https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=/v/r/2017/electoral%20\(special%20assistance%20funding\)%20variation%20regulations%202017_189](https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=/v/r/2017/electoral%20(special%20assistance%20funding)%20variation%20regulations%202017_189)

Advance funding to new entrants

Political parties registered after the previous election, but at least eight months out from the next election, would be entitled to a small amount of public funding. Independent candidates (who are not sitting MPs) would also be entitled to this public funding.¹²

A newly registered party would receive \$2,500 per lower house candidate, eight months before the election. An independent candidate would receive the same amount. About one month before the election,¹³ a further \$500,000 would be divided between all independent candidates and candidates for newly registered parties – but never more than \$2,500 per

¹² Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), sec.3(1), 9(7)

¹³ Technically, after the writs are issued.

candidate. Roughly the same system is proposed for the Legislative Council, although the amount payable in that case would be capped at six candidates per party or group.¹⁴

In other words, at best the Bill would provide \$5,000 per independent candidate or candidate from a newly registered political party.

EFFECTS OF PROPOSED CHANGES

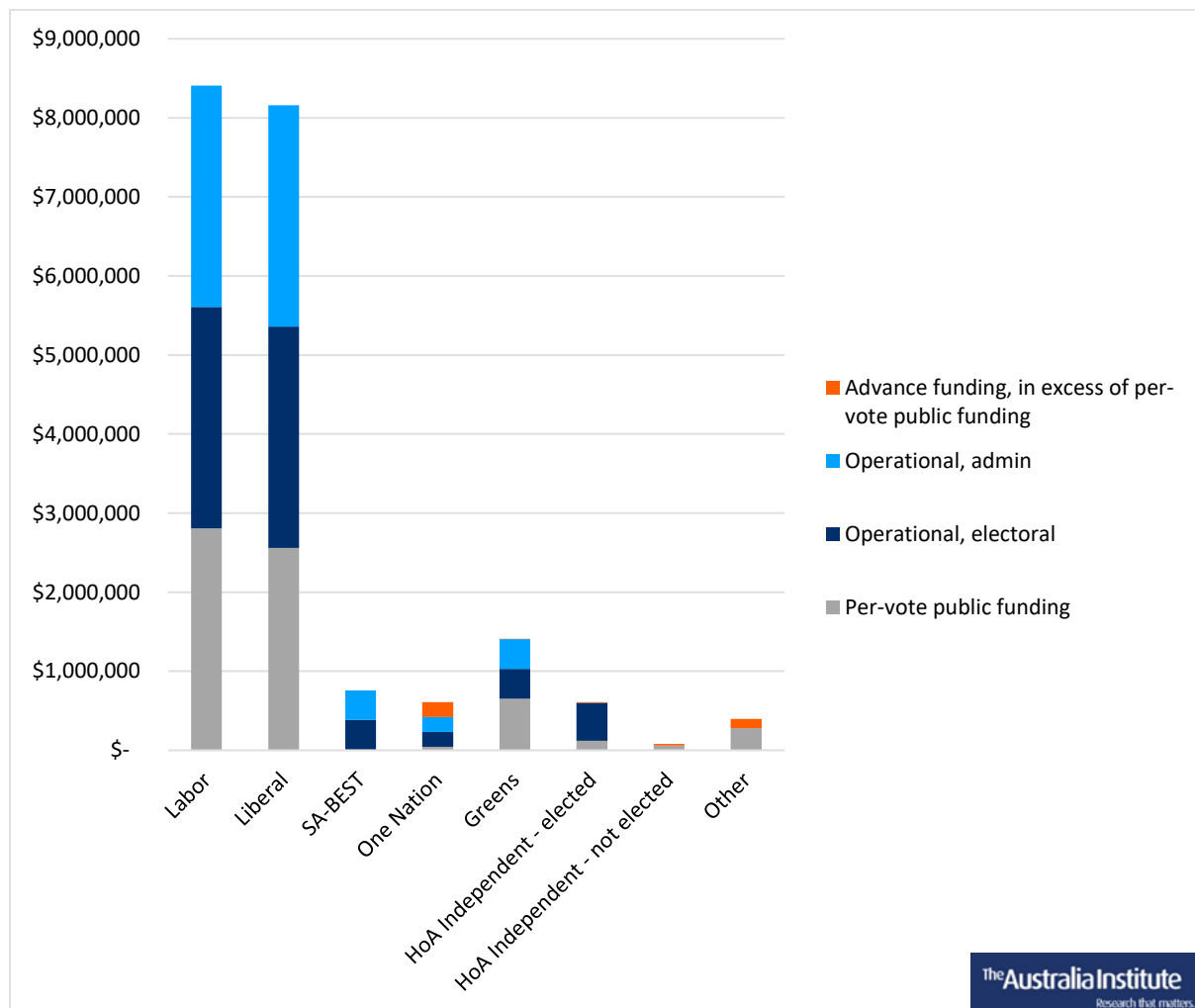
Between per-vote funding and diverted operational funding, the Labor and Liberal parties would have over \$5 million each to spend on their election campaigns, allowing their candidates and parliamentarians to save time and party resources that would otherwise be spent fundraising.

Independent MPs would also go into the election with more public funding than they would be allowed to spend on a campaign (\$120,000, compared to the \$100,000 spending cap discussed later). This extra money can be spent campaigning outside of the eight-month election period.

An independent candidate (who is not an MP) and each candidate of a new party would get at most \$5,000. They would have to raise their remaining costs (both campaign costs and other costs) via private donations, but receive no more than \$2,700 per donor.

¹⁴ Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), pp. 9–15

Figure 3: Approximate public funding per election cycle (if the Bill were legislated)



Note: Author’s calculations. See the appendix for more details.

It is not possible to calculate the additional cost of advance funding to new parties and independent candidates, because this figure would depend on the number of new entrants applying for that funding. Based on the number of parties and candidates contesting the 2022 election,¹⁵ the author calculates a cost of \$135,000.

¹⁵ Electoral Commission SA (2023) *2022 state election report*, p. 89, <https://ecsa.sa.gov.au/news/2022-state-election-report-released-today>

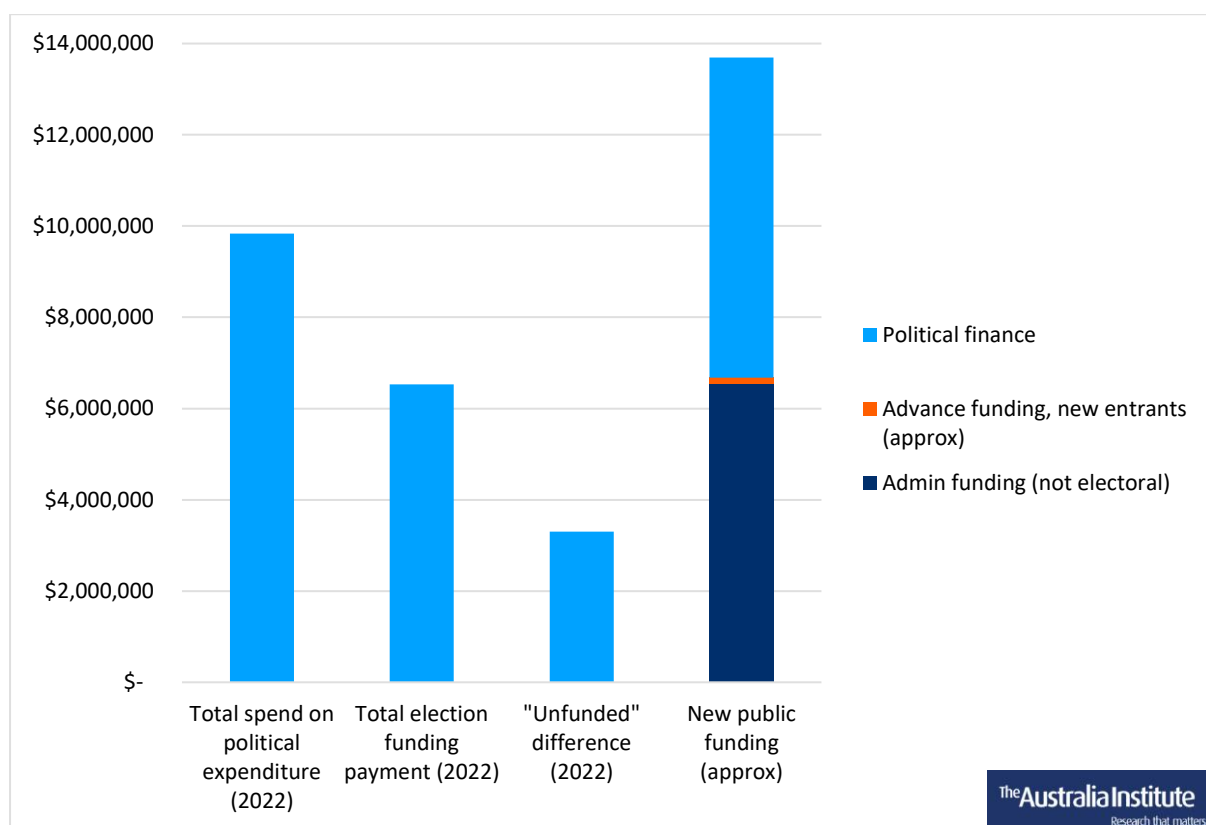
New public funding exceeds existing private funding

The Bill would increase the cost of public funding of elections by about \$14 million per electoral cycle, on top of the cost of the existing public funding model (\$6.5 million in 2022,¹⁶ and likely to be more in 2026 due to the Bill’s advance funding provisions).

The new public funding has been presented as being for the purpose of replacing private funding. However, the amount proposed far exceeds the difference between public funding and total expenditure in the 2022 election: the new public funding is about four times the amount that would have been needed to replace all private funding of parties and candidates in the 2022 election.

Granted, half of the new operational funding cannot be spent on political expenditure. But even the new operational funding that *can* be spent on political expenditure is double that needed to replace all private funding of political expenditure.

Figure 4: New public funding compared to existing election costs



Source: Author’s calculations; Electoral Commission SA (2023) *2022 state election report*, p. 90, <https://ecsa.sa.gov.au/news/2022-state-election-report-released-today>

Despite this, the Bill would not replace all private money in South Australian elections. The new public funding is mostly directed at incumbent parties and MPs; new entrants and

¹⁶ Electoral Commission SA (2023) *2022 state election report*, p. 90

existing parties without parliamentary representation would remain about as dependent on private funding as ever. The Bill also continues to allow party membership fees, a form of private funding that presumably accounts for a large share of existing private funding.

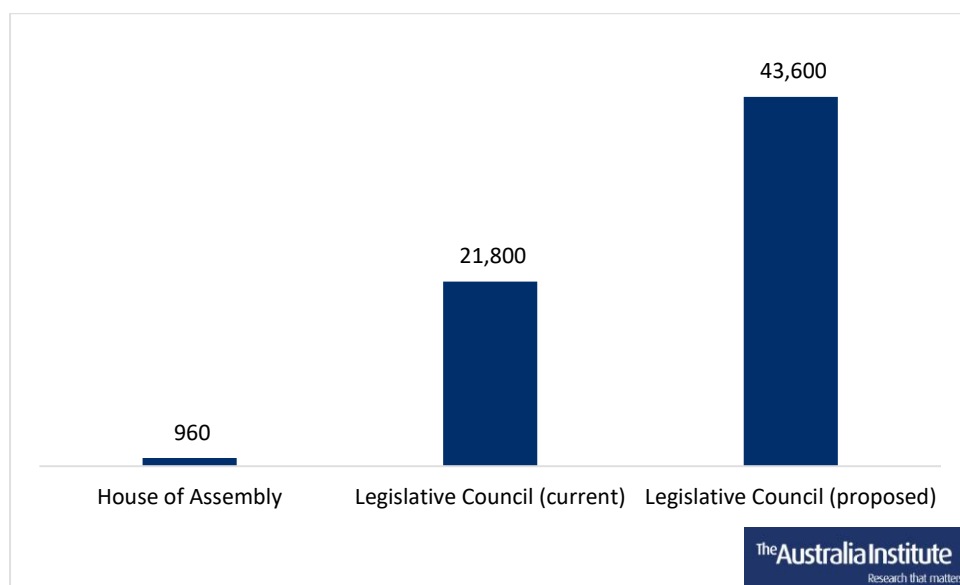
Increase in Legislative Council cap would hurt minor parties

The Bill would increase the threshold a Legislative Council candidate must reach to be eligible for per-vote public funding from 2% to 4% of the primary vote. No justification is given for this increase, except that the threshold would apply to both houses' elections "consistently".

This rationale implies there is any relationship between 4% of the vote in a single House of Assembly seat and 4% of the vote in a Legislative Council election. There is not.

It only takes about 960 votes to get 4% of the vote in a House of Assembly seat; it takes about 43,600 votes to get 4% of the vote in a Legislative Council seat.

Figure 5: Primary votes required to be eligible for public funding (approximate)



Source: Author's calculations based on the total number of voters at the 2022 election

Raising the public funding threshold in the Legislative Council would dramatically limit the public funding available for minor parties. In the 2022 state election, for example, the Liberal Democrats, Family First and Legalise Cannabis parties each received between 2% and 4% of the vote, making them eligible for about \$488,000 in public funding,¹⁷ of which they claimed \$263,000 because they did not spend enough money to get a full reimbursement.

¹⁷ Family First's entitlement was in part due to its House of Assembly vote, but unfortunately the Electoral Commission of South Australia does not split out the entitlements.

Another five parties received over 7,000 primary votes in the Legislative Council – more than some House of Assembly candidates who were actually elected, but not enough to reach the 2% threshold. Between them, these five parties received 53,800 votes, which would have been worth about \$235,000 to a major party or other party or group that crossed the vote threshold.¹⁸

Other parts of the Bill acknowledge the Legislative Council’s larger voter base by requiring independent candidates to receive 500 nominations before they can run in there, five times as many as are required to run in the House of Assembly.¹⁹

In other words, “consistency” between the houses has been pursued where it would make it harder for independent candidates and rejected where it would make seeking election easier for independents and minor parties.

All-or-nothing per-vote public funding eligibility

There are certainly good reasons to limit election campaign funding based on vote share; amongst other things, doing so:

- Discourages people from running if they do not have a base of popular support;
- Limits administration costs for the electoral commission; and
- Discourages people from running for office just to raise money.

However, the use of an absolute threshold of 4% in House of Assembly elections means that a few votes can make the difference between a candidate about \$4,000 versus receiving nothing.

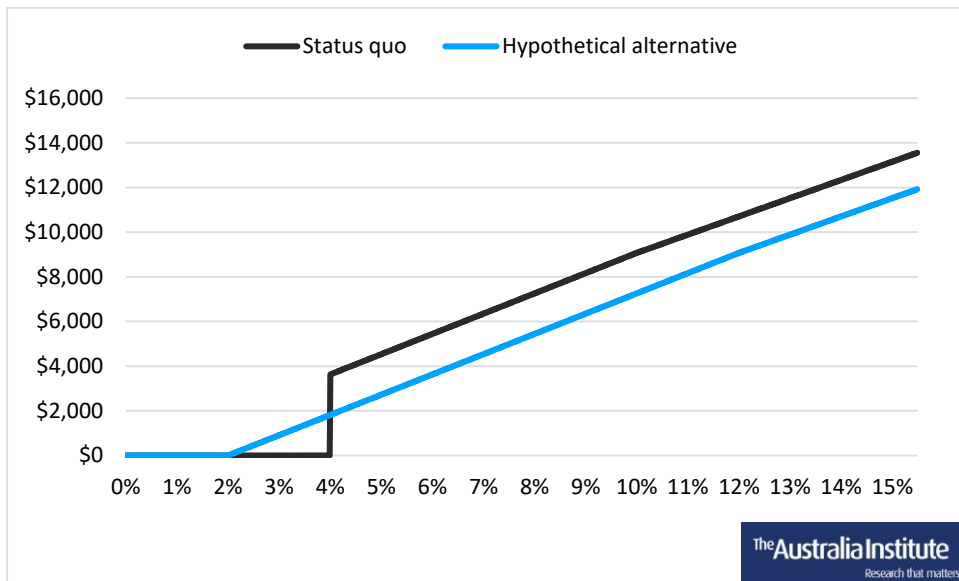
One solution could be to fund every vote received after the threshold. For example, the threshold for receiving election campaign funding could be set to 2% of the vote, but funding would only be available for every vote received *after* that threshold. This would create a steadier progression, shown in Figure 6 below.

Such a model would still require legislators to figure out the desirable threshold for receiving election campaign funding, but it would at least reduce the all-or-nothing impact of that threshold.

¹⁸ The advance funding provisions may go some way to ameliorating this, albeit only about eight years after the votes were received, if advance funding is calculated based on total votes regardless of whether the 4% threshold is met. In other words, if a payment “will not be made” due to s 130Q, is that a “deduction or reduction” under s 130PA(2)? Both the terms “deduct” and “reduce” appear elsewhere to describe sums of money subtracted from s 130P, and the heading of s 130Q distinguishes reductions from payments “not to be made” altogether.

¹⁹ Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), sec.8

Figure 6: Effect of a steady election campaign funding model (House of Assembly)



Source: Author's calculations based on a candidate for a party with parliamentary representation

This hypothetical model would result in significantly less election campaign funding for some parties and candidates (about \$1,800 less for most candidates who pass the threshold). This is not necessarily a flaw. However, it would be easy to tweak the hypothetical model to narrow this gap or remove it altogether while keeping the calculation simple and the falloff steady – for example, by using an accelerated rate between 2% and 6% similar to the “tapered” funding already in place for some candidates.

Donation caps and bans

Under the Bill, donations to sitting MPs and existing political parties would be banned, while donations to newly registered parties and independent candidates would be capped.

PROPOSED CHANGES

Donation ban

The Bill would ban any donation to a registered political party (in other words, one that existed at the time of the last state election), along with any donation to a member of Parliament with the intention of funding electoral expenditure.²⁰ It would also broaden the definition of donation to include levies, membership fees and the like, closing a loophole in donation caps that occurs elsewhere.²¹

The Bill makes an exception for party membership fees, up to \$100 per year (\$400 per electoral cycle).²²

Donation cap

The Bill would cap any “electoral donations” made to newly registered political parties and independent candidates at \$2,700 per donation. It would also cap total electoral donations during the eight months leading up to an election at the spending cap (\$100,000 for a single candidate).²³

The Bill’s definition of a political donation varies based on the recipient. For the purposes of a political party, any donation is an electoral donation. For a candidate, it is any donation used solely or substantially for “electoral purposes”.

The author could not find any justification provided for setting the cap at \$2,700, except perhaps that this is “consistent to what has been found to be constitutional in NSW”.²⁴

²⁰ Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), pp. 7, 23–25

²¹ Browne and Connolly (2023) *Submission: Money and power in Victorian elections*

²² Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), p. 24

²³ Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), pp. 27–28

²⁴ Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre (2024) *SA Premier Peter Malinauskas In-Conversation with George Megalogenis*, 51:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcx_hKgS_FE

EFFECTS OF PROPOSED CHANGES

The combined effect of the ban on donations to established parties and candidates, the donation cap for new entrants and the generous public funding for incumbents would be to ensure that incumbents would not be able to raise funds – but also that they would not need to do so. New entrants, however, would have to spend more time fundraising than they otherwise would do because they cannot accept larger donations.

“Funding traps” for minor parties, truly new parties and party defectors

Political parties without an MP would receive little or no per-vote public funding and no per-MP operational funding *and* would still be banned from receiving political donations at the next election. This “funding trap” would make it impossible for these parties to raise more than small amounts of money.

A similar situation faces political parties that register within eight months of an election. These parties do not count as “newly registered parties” for the purpose of advance funding, public funding *or* the exception to the donation ban, leaving them totally unable to fundraise. Eight months is a long time in which political movements and issues can emerge: consider that SA-BEST registered less than nine months out from the 2018 election, at which it won 14% of the lower house and 19% of the upper house vote.

A sitting MP who leaves their political party to run as an independent is similarly affected. They will only receive operational funding for a fraction of their time in office, do not receive advance funding based on votes they won at the previous election and are banned from receiving any political donations.

Wealthy candidates still uncapped

The Bill provides that a candidate or upper house group can “make contributions up to a total amount equal to the applicable expenditure cap applying to the candidate or group”.²⁵

As far as the author understands, this means the donation cap does not apply to candidates, so wealthy candidates could self-fund their election campaigns, while their poorer rivals would be forbidden from receiving donations at all (for MPs or existing parties) or receiving donations above \$2,700 (for independent candidates and new parties). Self-funded candidates would not even need to disclose these payments unless they exceeded \$100,000.

²⁵ *Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill)* (SA), pp.26–27 <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/electoral-reform>

Other interventions by vested interests

Vested interests like big business do use political donations as a tool – and limiting their use of donations could limit their influence. But corporations have many other ways of wielding influence, and it would be counterproductive if South Australia were to make it hard for diverse voices to contest elections in order to close off just one avenue of corporate influence.

Membership exception

The Bill makes an exception to the donation cap for party membership fees, up to \$100 per year (\$400 per electoral cycle).

Political party membership numbers in South Australia are opaque, but mandatory disclosures means they are known for NSW.²⁶ If the Liberal, Labor and Greens parties in South Australia have the same per capita membership as they do in NSW, there are about 3,300 Liberal members, 3,400 Labor members and 800 Greens members in SA.

If each member pays the maximum \$400 per cycle, membership funds would represent an additional \$1.3 million for the Liberal Party, \$1.4 million for the Labor Party and \$320,000 for the Greens.

In other words, even if the donation ban were introduced, the major parties in South Australia would likely remain the main beneficiaries of private funding.

²⁶ Browne (2024) *Submission - Review of the 2023 NSW election*, pp. 16–17

Spending caps

PROPOSED CHANGES

In South Australia, parties and candidates that opt in to receive public funding are subject to spending caps (called “political expenditure caps”). A lower house candidate’s individual spending is capped at about \$112,000, while an upper house group of candidates (a party or group of independents) cannot spend more than about \$558,000.²⁷ A party’s statewide cap is equal to about \$84,000 per endorsed lower house candidate plus about \$558,000 if it is running a full ticket of upper house candidates. This equates to a total of about \$4.5 million.²⁸ The caps apply from eight months out from the election.

Note that while spending caps for parties are calculated by reference to the number of candidates they endorse, and each candidate’s spending is capped at about \$112,000, a party’s spending in a particular seat is not limited in that way. The only party expenditure capped on a per-seat or per-candidate basis is that which “expressly mentions the name of the candidate or the district or displays the image of the candidate”, “is communicated to electors in the district” and “is not mainly communicated to electors outside the district”.²⁹

The Bill would make the spending caps mandatory. It would also lower them to \$100,000 for each lower house candidate or \$500,000 for each upper house group.³⁰ A party’s state-wide cap would equal \$75,000 per lower house candidate plus \$500,000 if running a full ticket of upper house candidates (about \$4 million total).³¹ In other words, a party can spend up to the \$100,000 cap in *most* seats, but not *every* seat. And, as noted above, while the cap for political parties is calculated on a per-candidate basis, spending targeting a particular seat can exceed the cap provided it does not expressly mention or depict the candidate for that seat.

Under existing laws (which would remain unchanged in the Bill), parties and candidates are forbidden from making arrangements with a third party whereby the third party incurs political expenditure in order to circumvent the party or candidate’s cap.³²

²⁷ SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, pp. 6–7

²⁸ *Electoral Act 1985 (SA)*, sec.130Z

²⁹ Electoral Commission SA (n.d.) *Parties and candidates – Political expenditure caps*, <https://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au/?view=category&id=13&start=16>

³⁰ SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, pp. 16–17

³¹ Electoral (Accountability and Integrity) Amendment Bill 2024 (Draft Bill) (SA), pp. 22–23

³² SA AGD (2024) *Electoral reform - Banning political donations: Explanatory guide*, p. 8

EFFECTS

If all else is equal, spending caps tend to favour incumbents, both because incumbents start with inherent advantages that a challenger must spend money to match and because there are economies of scale in election campaigns from which smaller players do not benefit.

Spending caps also tend to favour major parties, because the major parties can “pile in” to target seats and effectively spend beyond the cap.

Major party and incumbent benefits

An incumbent MP has the benefit of name recognition, a high profile and a publicly funded electoral allowance (between \$17,000 and \$54,000 per year), some of which may be spent on communications.³³ A challenger therefore has to spend money just to “catch up” to the incumbent, in a campaigning sense.

“Piling in” by major parties

Even when a spending cap applies to each candidate in a particular electorate, in practice political parties that operate state-wide can concentrate their spending on target electorates. For example, a party that runs in both houses of parliament can spend up to its upper house cap in areas that contain target lower house seats. Parties can also spend in an area where one or more target seats are located, without that spending counting towards the seat’s cap.

Australia Institute research for NSW and Victoria suggests that between major parties “piling in” (spending less in safe seats to leave more “cap” for target seats) and incumbency advantages, a fair spending cap for an independent challenger might be several times higher than the fair cap for a party MP.³⁴

³³ Remuneration Tribunal of South Australia (2023) *16 of 2023, 17 of 2022*, <https://www.remtribunal.sa.gov.au/reports-and-determinations/members-of-the-parliament2/members-of-the-parliament>

³⁴ Browne (2024) *Submission - Review of the 2023 NSW election*, pp. 27–28

Unlimited third-party spending

The Bill does not cap expenditure by third parties. Because this paper focuses on the effects of the Bill on political parties and candidates, this differential treatment of third parties – though alarming – is mostly out of scope. However, it is worth noting that some political parties and candidates have closer relationships with third parties than others. This gives the parties and candidates that enjoy these relationships an obvious advantage if third-party spending is uncapped while party and candidate spending is compulsorily capped (as opposed to being part of an opt-in cap, as is currently the case).

Further considerations

The Bill proposes dramatic changes to how political parties and candidates raise money. It would introduce two new forms of public funding, in addition to the current per-vote public funding model; and it would ban political donations to established political parties and incumbent MPs. New political parties and candidates (who are not MPs) could still raise money through donations, but those donations would be strictly capped.

The Bill would mean that parties and incumbent MPs would become almost exclusively publicly funded, while new entrants would have to carry out extensive fundraising to gather the money they need to contest seats.

Would public funding survive a High Court challenge to the donation ban?

The additional public funding for existing parties and incumbent MPs has been justified on the grounds that these parties and MPs will be subject to a donation ban. However, if the High Court overturns the donation ban – as Premier Malinauskas has recognised is very possible³⁵ – then the generous public funding would presumably remain alongside the private funding it was meant to replace.

Is public money being spent wisely?

Distributing operational funding to parties based on how many sitting MPs they have is something also done in NSW, but at least in NSW the money is restricted to administrative purposes.³⁶ Under the proposed South Australian changes, half of this money could be banked for electoral purposes.

It is not clear – either in NSW or South Australia – why political parties are so costly to administer, especially since they remain able to collect membership fees. It is also unclear why getting more candidates elected would make a party more expensive to administer.

Providing funding per sitting MP would also create a skewed power dynamic in smaller parties, where a single MP could mean the difference between a party being able to employ

³⁵ Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre (2024) *SA Premier Peter Malinauskas In-Conversation with George Megalogenis*, 29:58

³⁶ Browne (2024) *Submission - Review of the 2023 NSW election*, pp. 10–11

staff or not. The MP could threaten to switch parties or sit as an independent to have an outsized influence on the party administration.³⁷

If there is a case for subsidising political parties, it should be done based on how many South Australians join a party and attend its meetings and conferences. This method would come closer to reflecting true public support and the actual costs of party administration, which presumably scale by number of members, not by number of parliamentarians.

As noted in The Australia Institute’s submission to the inquiry into the NSW election, if political parties are to be majority publicly funded, this funding should come with responsibilities just as it does for other quasi-NGOs like art galleries and museums – including meeting standards on governance, transparency and accounting.³⁸

Do limits on private funding of elections stop new entrants from contesting power?

Australians are rightly concerned about corporate interests buying access to ministers and shadow ministers, and the conflict of interest that arises when the tobacco, fossil fuel, consulting and gambling industries make large donations to governments and oppositions.

But, perversely, restrictions on political donations can end up helping the parties of government. If it becomes more difficult for independents and candidates from minor parties to be elected, there may be fewer voices in Parliament to challenge the decisions of the major parties, and fewer voices to question the influence of vested interests.

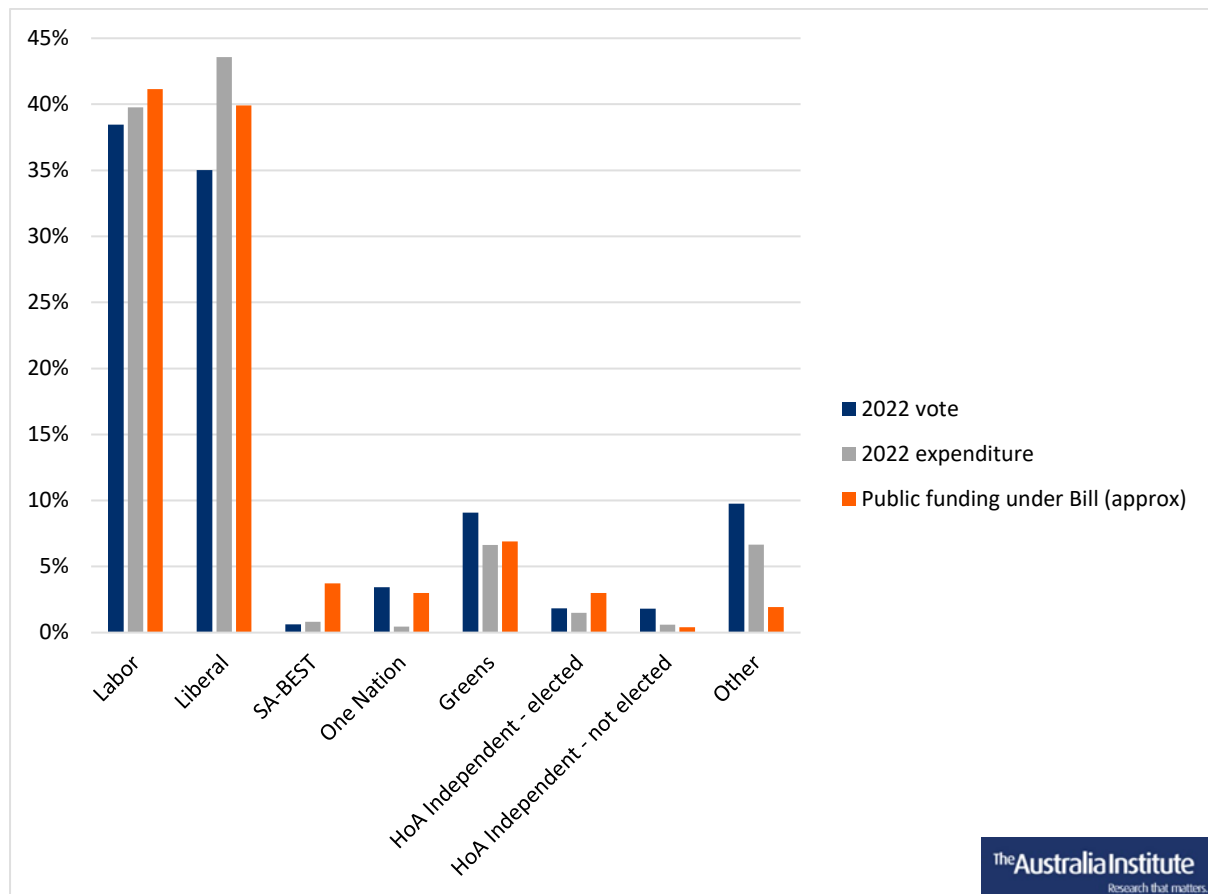
Public funding spoils reflect neither historical spending nor vote share

Figure 7 below compares the 2022 vote (House of Assembly and Legislative Council summed) and 2022 political expenditure share to the approximate public funding that each group would receive under the Bill.

³⁷ See for example Maddison (2024) *One Nation looks to recruit Craig Kelly in NSW, sources say*, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/one-nation-looks-to-recruit-craig-kelly-in-nsw-sources-say-20240226-p5f7uv.html>

³⁸ Browne (2024) *Submission - Review of the 2023 NSW election*, pp. 15–17

Figure 7: Share of 2022 vote, 2022 expenditure and potential public funding under the Bill per election cycle



Note: Author’s calculations. See the appendix for more details.

For the major parties, public funding would correlate to vote share. Since the Liberal Party spent considerably more in 2022 than its vote share would suggest, it would be a net loser relative to Labor. However, both major parties would receive a greater proportion of public funding under the Bill than their share of the vote in 2022.

Parties with parliamentary representation that spend less than their share of the vote would suggest, like One Nation, are potential beneficiaries from the Bill’s public funding model. Independent MPs are other beneficiaries, with their public funding under the Bill far exceeding their vote share.

Independent candidates for the House of Assembly who are not sitting MPs, along with minor parties and Legislative Council groups without parliamentary representation, are most obviously the biggest losers under the Bill, even accounting for the new advance funding for new entrants.

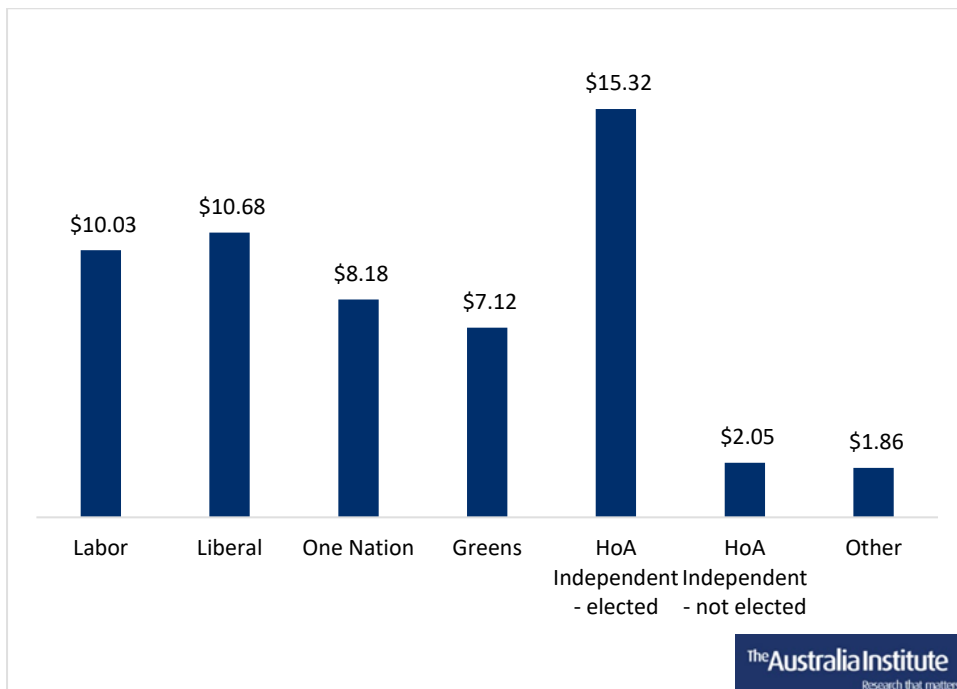
SA-BEST is an unusual case because its parliamentary representation is solely a result of the 2018 election and the Legislative Council’s staggered terms. A fair and complete analysis would account for SA-BEST’s Legislative Council vote in the 2018 election, but this proved

beyond the author’s abilities. SA-BEST is included for completeness in Figure 7 but the author does not think it is fair to compare SA-BEST’s 2022 election result to its funding across a 2018–26 term.

Figure 8 below shows another way to account for public funding: relative to vote in 2022. As above, this is the sum of House of Assembly and Legislative Council votes. Every South Australian elector casts two votes, so the share of public funding per voter would be double what is given below.

There is a clear difference between the public funding provided to political parties with parliamentary representation versus that provided to independent candidates and parties without parliamentary representation.

Figure 8: Share of public funding under the Bill, per 2022 vote



Note: Author’s calculations. See the appendix for more details.

Is Labor giving up a fundraising advantage?

When Premier Malinauskas presented the donation ban, he described it as disadvantaging his own government:

We are a relatively new government; we’re doing pretty well at fundraising at the moment. We handed down our budget on Thursday. On Friday we had the state Progressive Business lunch. Progressive Business being the fundraising arm of the Labor Party. It was the biggest, most well attended one we ever had and that reflects the enormous benefit of incumbency.

It's a lot easier to sell tickets to hear what the government of the day is doing than sell tickets to hear what a would-be government might do. There is no shortage of people at all, of people in my own show, who have pointed out that this election reform is contrary to my own government's interests, and they are right.³⁹

It may be easier to fundraise when in government than in opposition, but it does not follow that the Bill is contrary to the Labor Government's interests.

ECSA provides political expenditure data for the 2018 and 2022 state elections.⁴⁰ When Labor was in government in 2018, the Liberals outspent Labor by a smaller margin than when Labor was in opposition in 2022 (\$1.16 for every \$1 vs \$1.10 for every \$1), but they still outspent Labor.

Therefore, placing further limits on political expenditure and providing equal additional public funding to both major parties is unlikely to disadvantage the Labor Government – if anything, it seems the opposite is true.

Similarly, using significant volumes of public money to fund incumbent parties' campaigns at a higher rate than private money has previously, should also be viewed as advantageous to existing parties, especially the major Labor and Liberal parties. There is also a question of value for money. The expectation should always be that if public money is put to partisan electoral ends, the sum of money involved should be as modest as it can be while still achieving legitimate policy ends.

³⁹ Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre (2024) *SA Premier Peter Malinauskas In-Conversation with George Megalogenis*, 25:11

⁴⁰ Electoral Commission SA (2018) *2018 state election report*, <https://ecsa.sa.gov.au/about-ecsa/publications/publications-state-election-and-by-election-reports>; (2023) *2022 state election report*

Alternative public funding models

The approximately \$20 million of public funding that would be spent if the Bill passed (most of which is new spending) should instead be spent on a public funding scheme that:

- Actually replaces all private money in South Australian elections;
- Does so in a way that is fair to new entrants as well as incumbents;
- Encourages political parties and candidates to involve the community in electoral and party processes;
- Addresses the asymmetry of power between the wealthy and the disadvantaged; and
- Empowers South Australians to decide who – if anyone – is funded and how much funding they receive.

One such scheme is the democracy voucher system.

Under this model, eligible voters are sent vouchers with a certain amount of public funding that they can send to the candidate or party of their choice. For example, a voter may get four \$25 vouchers to distribute. This system has been used successfully in the City of Seattle, and is discussed in more detail below.

Another option is “multiple matching”, where small private donations are matched by public funding. This rewards candidates with genuine public support by making small donations relatively more powerful. However, such a scheme could not replace private donations altogether; rather it would magnify the impact of small donations relative to large ones.⁴¹

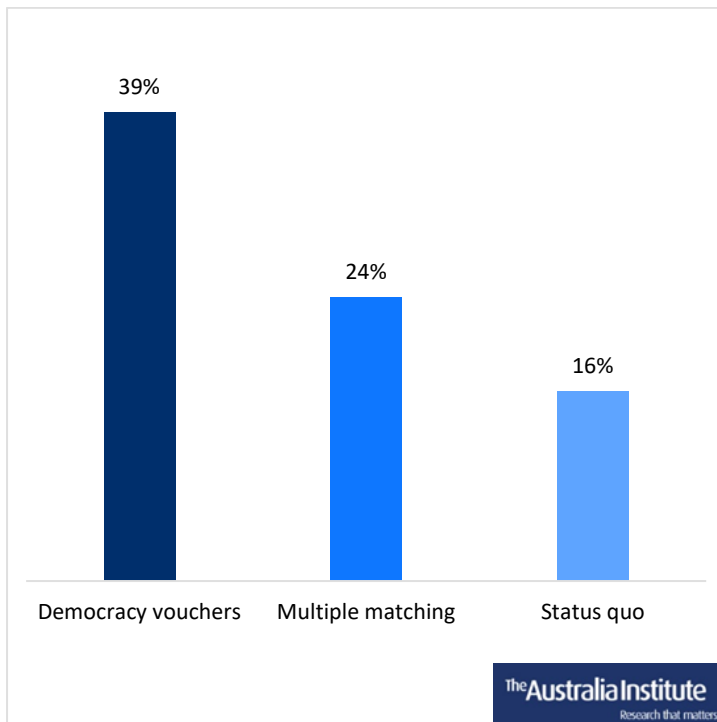
VOUCHERS WOULD INCREASE PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVATION

Australia Institute polling research finds that while the majority of Australians say they are unlikely to provide financial support to a political party or candidate in the next federal election, regardless of the funding model used, more would participate under a democracy voucher model than a multiple matching model or the status quo.

More Australians say they would participate in a voucher-based public funding scheme (39%) than donate under a multiple matching model (24%) or the status quo (16%) at the next federal election.

⁴¹ Parts of this chapter first appeared in Morison and Browne (2023) *Submission: 2022 Victorian state election inquiry* or in a polling brief prepared by Ben Walters for the Australia Institute.

Figure 9: Likelihood of participating at the next federal election, by funding model



Source: Australia Institute polling research.

Respondents were asked if they had ever donated to a political party or candidate. One in 10 (10%) respondents said they had previously donated to a political party or candidate. This is less than the number who say they are “likely” to donate to a political party or candidate at the next federal election (16%). This suggests that respondents somewhat over-estimate how likely they are to make political donations.

After assessing how likely respondents thought they were to make political donations at the next election under the status quo, respondents were asked how likely they would be to participate in two alternative public funding models.

Democracy vouchers

Respondents were shown the following:

The City of Seattle uses a public funding model for its elections, called “democracy vouchers”. Before an election, each voter is sent four vouchers worth \$25 each. They can allocate these vouchers to the candidates that they support, or recycle them if there are no candidates they wish to support.

Participants were then asked how likely they would be to use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates if they received four vouchers each worth \$25 before the next federal election.

Two in five Australians (39%) said they would be likely to use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates. 46% said they would be unlikely to use some or all of the vouchers.

Multiple matching

Respondents were shown the following:

The City of New York uses a different public funding model for its elections, called “multiple matching”. Before an election, voters who make small donations to a candidate can have their donations topped up by public money. For example, if eligible, a \$175 donation would become \$1,050 thanks to public funding.

They were then asked how likely or unlikely is it that they would make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next federal election if Australia adopted a multiple matching system, whereby their small donation to a candidate would be topped up by public money.

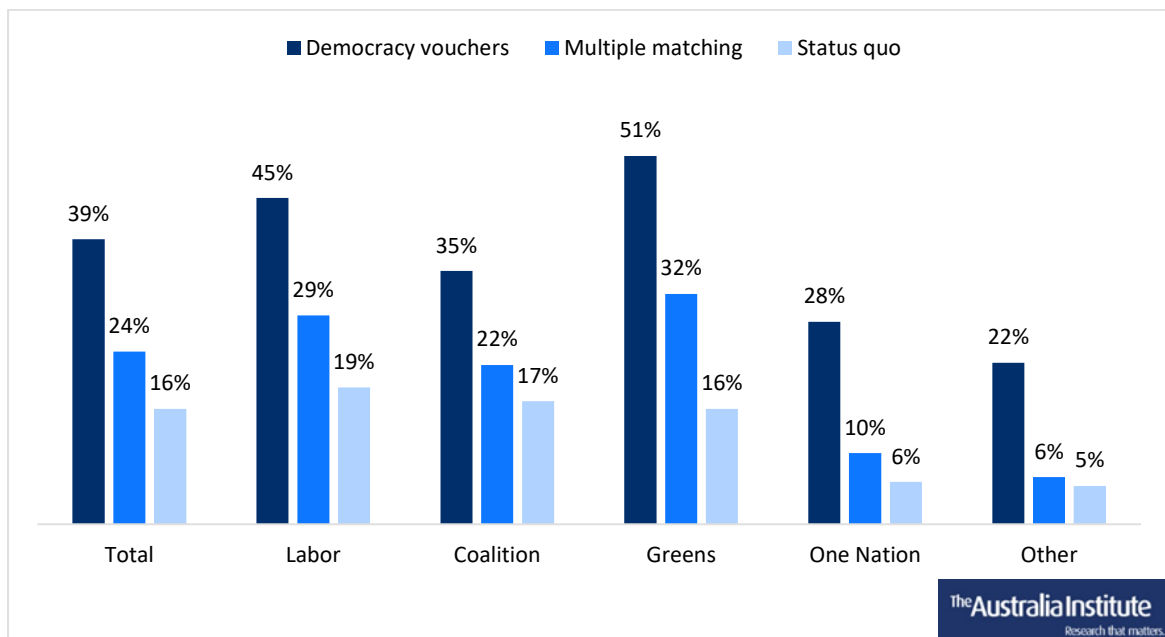
One in four Australians (24%) said they would be likely to make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next federal election if Australia adopted a multiple matching system. 64% say they would be unlikely to donate at the next federal election if Australia adopted a multiple matching system.

Comparing funding models

More Australians say they would participate in a voucher-based public funding scheme than donate under a multiple matching model or the status quo.

More respondents are likely to use democracy vouchers (39% are likely) than donate under a multiple matching system (24% are likely) and or donate under the status quo (16% are likely). Across all voting intentions, more respondents would use democracy vouchers than donate under multiple matching or the status quo.

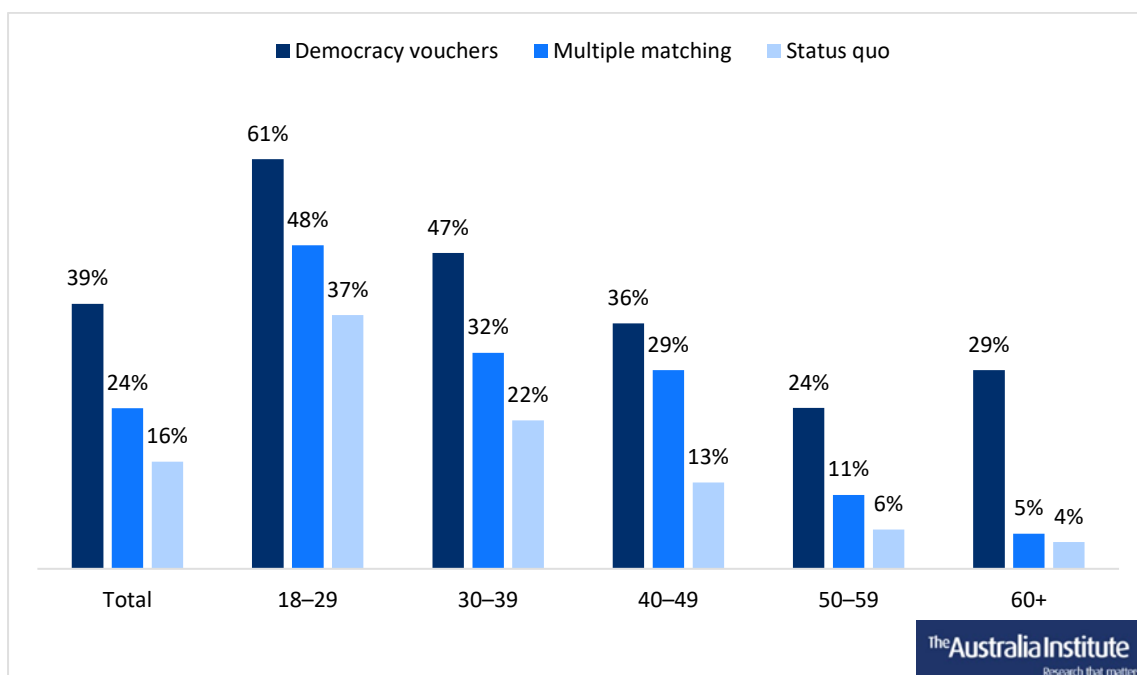
Figure 10: Likelihood of participating at the next federal election, by voting intention



Source: Australia Institute polling research.

Across all age ranges, more respondents would use democracy vouchers than donate under multiple matching or the status quo. While the youngest group (18–29) were most likely to say they would use democracy vouchers (61% are likely), it is the oldest group (60 and older) that see the greatest *increase* in participation compared to multiple matching (5%) or the status quo (4%).

Figure 11: Likelihood of donating at the next federal election, by age group



Source: Australia Institute polling research.

A VOUCHER SCHEME IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A well-designed democracy voucher scheme would better meet the Bill's stated objectives than the currently proposed public funding scheme. Democracy vouchers could replace private funding of both new entrants and incumbents, and do so proportionate to public support.

The question then becomes how valuable a "voucher" should be. In Seattle in 2021, about 8% of the voting age population used their vouchers, with the total value of their four vouchers being US\$100 for each person of voting age.⁴²

If uptake were similar in South Australia, with its electorate of some 1.3 million, a voucher scheme could replace the \$20 million proposed in public funding by offering every person on the electoral roll about \$175 in vouchers. However, we consider that uptake would most likely be higher in South Australia, for the following reasons:

- The election is a state election rather than a local election;
- South Australian elections are only half as frequent as City of Seattle elections; and
- Australia Institute polling research finding 39% of Australians said they would use vouchers at a federal election.

Given this, distributing vouchers worth \$100 per voter seems reasonable. If the scheme were over- or under-subscribed, the value of a voucher could be adjusted for subsequent elections.

A party or candidate could use the vouchers for electoral or operational purposes, but not any other purpose.

A voucher scheme has several major advantages over the public funding scheme that would be created by the Bill:

- It places in the hands of voters the decision about which parties and candidates to fund, and how much to fund them by;
- It accounts for new entrants, not just incumbents;
- It encourages parties and candidates to speak to voters and win their active support, instead of incentivising spending on mass advertisements as current public funding arrangements do;
- It is less "swingy" than the Bill's public funding scheme, where large amounts of funding depend on crossing vote thresholds or the vagaries of particular electoral results; and

⁴² Heerwig and McCabe (2022) *Broadening donor participation in local elections*, p. 2, <https://electionlawblog.org/?p=131458>

- It allows voters to withhold public funding altogether if they think public funding is less important than other uses for public money.

Next steps

Removing the influence of vested interests and restoring confidence in South Australian democracy are admirable objectives. However, replacing private donations to the major parties with millions of dollars of taxpayer money, while making it harder for anyone to challenge the entrenched power of incumbents, will only further diminish public trust.

Nor is the apprehension that the parties of government are corrupted or perceived as corrupted by political donations a good excuse for drastically limiting the political donations that independents and minor parties can receive.

In its present form, the Bill would ensure that major parties and incumbent MPs of any party or none go into election campaigns fully funded up to the spending cap; in fact, they are likely to have money to spare, which they can spend campaigning outside of the capped expenditure period. Established parties and incumbent MPs also reap the advantages of incumbency, putting them further ahead of any challenger.

This significant public funding for the major parties would occur despite a complete lack of consultation with South Australians about what they expect in exchange for public money – like better governance, transparency and democratic internal structures.

Meanwhile, the Bill would mean that new entrants must spend more time and effort fundraising than ever before, and would have to operate under a spending cap that stops them from ever matching the advantages of incumbency. Existing minor parties without parliamentary representation are worst affected of all, ineligible for most public funding but unable to fundraise privately either.

Recommendations

A parliamentary inquiry should be held to review the Bill with an eye to amending it or drafting a new Bill from scratch, ensuring that any legislation put to a vote in the South Australian Parliament:

- Places public funding in the hands of the South Australian public, such as through a democracy voucher scheme;
- Accounts for the advantages of incumbency; and
- Gives fair treatment to major parties, minor parties with parliamentary representation, minor parties without parliamentary representation and independents (both incumbents and new candidates).

This could include, but not be limited to:

- Introducing democracy vouchers to allow for fully publicly-funded elections;
- Keeping spending caps opt-in and/or setting different spending caps to account for the advantages of incumbency;
- Limiting a donation ban to those who opt-in to a public funding scheme;
- Adopting a mega-donor cap instead of a donation cap;⁴³
- Ensuring third parties are regulated in a fair and consistent manner;
- Making any new public funding conditional on the results of a consultation with the South Australian public on what they expect from parties that are majority taxpayer funded, including but not limited to (a) transparency, whistleblower protections and freedom of information laws, (b) democratic internal structures and (c) governance; and
- Finding ways to ensure that third party spending is in the public interest – for example, by requiring publicly listed companies to seek shareholder approval for political expenditure.

At the very least, the Bill should not be passed unless it is amended to:

- Lower the public funding threshold to 0% in the Legislative Council;
- Replace the 4% threshold for election campaign funding with a steady model and cap per-vote public funding to the higher of lower house votes received and upper house votes received;
- Not introduce per-MP operational funding;
- Require contributions from candidates and groups to their own campaigns to be disclosed as political donations;
- Increase advance funding for new entrants so a new entrant with a broad base of public support can totally forego private donations;
- Require parties accepting public funding to publish audited annual reports in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards that present fairly the party's financial position, financial performance and cash flows; and
- Ensure that all changes introduced by the Bill revert to their pre-Bill operation if any part of the changes are found to be unconstitutional by the High Court of Australia.

⁴³ As described in Browne & Walters (2023) *Securing transparency and diversity in political finance*, pp. 19–23, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/securing-transparency-and-diversity-in-political-finance/>

Conclusion

The South Australian Government has proposed a bold experiment, one that would make the South Australian taxpayer the almost sole funder of the parties of government and sitting MPs. But political parties, which are already generously publicly funded, do not follow the same governance and transparency standards that are expected of other quasi-NGOs like art galleries and museums.

No one has asked South Australians what they want in exchange for becoming almost the sole financiers of the Liberal, Labor and Greens parties, among others.

There is also a philosophical question about the source of political parties' strength and legitimacy. Should parties be member-based organisations that get their power from recruiting people to the cause, or campaigning organisations that get their money from votes and the number of seats they win? The Government's Bill would further tilt incentives towards focusing on elections.

Nor do the changes described in the Government's Bill align with the principles of democratic competition, proportionality or a level playing field for new entrants. The Bill fails to account for minor parties without parliamentary representation; under its terms, such parties would be mostly ineligible for public *and* private funding. New entrants would find it harder to raise funds than before, while their major party rivals would be fully publicly funded. A lower and indiscriminate spending cap would, in practice, benefit incumbents who already get a head start from their entitlements as a sitting member.

The Bill would increase the cost of public funding to about \$20 million per electoral cycle, but leave voters disempowered as to how that money is distributed. The changes would also fail to remove private donations altogether, despite costing far in excess of the current private contribution to South Australian elections. Alternative methods of distributing public funding – such as democracy vouchers, a revenue-neutral alternative that could empower voters, require parties and candidates to engage with the public and allow new entrants to reject private funding – should be considered seriously.

Finally, the Bill fails to address third-party spending. This is understandable in isolation, since third parties run the gamut from astroturfing operations to democratic institutions with more members than any political party. However, the role of third parties needs urgent examination if new and stricter limits on candidate spending are to be adopted, given that such limits would only increase the relative power of vested interests, pressure groups and allies of existing parties.

Appendix: Public funding calculation

How the Bill will affect public funding is impossible to calculate exactly, in part because if the Bill becomes law it will change the behaviour of parties and candidates. Figures in this paper calculate public funding under the Bill based on the results of the 2022 election, unless otherwise mentioned.

Operational funding is relatively straightforward to calculate. It is \$94,000 per party MP per year, times by the four years of the electoral cycle. This is capped at \$1.4 million per year (\$5.6 million per cycle) for larger parties; in South Australia, only the Labor and Liberal parties currently qualify as larger parties for these purposes.

Half of the operational funding (technically, half plus one dollar) must be spent on administration but the other half (minus one dollar) can be spent on electoral purposes.

MPs who were elected as part of a political party have been counted as still belonging to that party (so the operational funding for SA-BEST is calculated as if both MPs remained with that party for the duration of the terms for which they were elected). While this introduces its own problems, it seemed like the only fair way to describe the relationship between (a) 2022 public funding (which is calculated pre-defections) and votes and (b) what public funding would look like under the Bill.

Independent MPs instead receive \$30,000 per year, all of which can be put to electoral purposes.

For per-vote public funding, the figures in the Electoral Commission of South Australia's 2022 election report were used. In addition, advance funding for existing parties and candidates was calculated by setting the funding of parties and candidates that did not spend enough money to receive their full public funding entitlement, to 80% of that entitlement, so as to reflect that under the Bill they could claim 80% of their public funding entitlements from the previous election in advance funding for the next election.

This is a simplification, because under the Bill the public funding for Legislative Council votes is based on the 2018 election, not the 2022 election. However, ECSA reports do not distinguish between upper and lower house public funding amounts. This simplification most obviously affects the SA-BEST party; this distinction is described in the text but not included in the mathematical calculations.

This approach also ignores the effects of raising the 2% funding threshold in the Legislative Council to 4%. In fact, this means that the money going to "Other" (minor parties without parliamentary representation; and independent candidates in the Legislative Council) is overstated in this report.

These calculations were checked against manual calculations of entitlements based on vote counts, and there were no glaring differences. However, it is always possible that there is a detail of electoral law that was missed. The Attorney-General's Department should work with the Electoral Commission of South Australia to release official calculations.

To account for the advance funding for new entrants that the Bill would introduce, the number of independent House of Assembly candidates who received less than 4% of the vote (4), the number of HoA candidates for a newly registered party (6, from the Australian Family Party), plus the number of independent and new minor party Legislative Council candidates who received less than 4% of the vote (17) was multiplied by \$5,000. Most independent candidates winning more than 4% of the vote, whether or not they were new entrants, would receive over \$5,000 via existing public funding schemes, so their advance funding would count against their per-vote public funding entitlement.

Appendix: Polling

Short disclosure statement

Panel provider	Dynata
Research company	The Australia Institute
Client commissioning the research	NA
Fieldwork dates	31 October and 3 November 2023
Mode of data collection	Online recruited from research panel
Target population	Australian adults aged 18+
Sample size	1,002 Australians, and a further 377 South Australians
Australian Polling Council compliant	Yes
Voting intention published	No
Long disclosure statement	See below

Long disclosure statement

Effective sample size after weighting applied	1,059
Margin of error associated with effective sample size	±3%
Variables used in weighting	Age, gender, state/territory based on Australian Bureau of Statistics "National, state and territory population" data
Gender identity categorisation	Those who answered the gender identity question as "Non-binary", "I use a different term", or "Prefer not to answer" had their responses included with females for the purpose of reporting, due to constraints from weighting data availability
Weighting method used	Raking method
Full question text, responses categories and randomisation	See below
Source of online sample	Dynata's online panel
Positioning of voting intention questions in questionnaire	Immediately after demographics, before policy questions
How were undecided voters handled?	Respondents who answered "Don't know / Not sure" for voting intention were then asked a leaning question; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs
Method of calculating 2PP	NA
Voting intention categorisation	Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. "Coalition" includes separate responses for Liberal and National. "Other" refers to Independent/Other, and minor parties in cases where they were included in the voting intention but represent too small a sample to be reported separately in the crosstabs
Location results	Results are shown only for larger states



Detailed results

No preceding questions in the poll are expected to have influenced the results of the questions published here.

Have you ever donated to a political party or candidate?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Yes	10%	15%	5%	9%	8%	8%	11%
No	89%	85%	93%	89%	90%	91%	89%
Don't know / Not sure	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Yes	10%	14%	9%	9%	6%	3%
No	89%	85%	90%	90%	92%	96%
Don't know / Not sure	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Yes	10%	20%	10%	9%	7%	6%
No	89%	79%	88%	90%	93%	94%
Don't know / Not sure	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%

How likely or unlikely are you to donate to a political party or candidate at the next federal election?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Very likely	7%	9%	5%	6%	7%	4%	7%
Likely	9%	10%	7%	9%	11%	8%	8%
Unlikely	16%	16%	17%	18%	13%	18%	21%
Very unlikely	64%	61%	66%	61%	65%	68%	61%
Don't know / Not sure	4%	4%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Very likely	7%	9%	7%	5%	4%	2%
Likely	9%	9%	10%	11%	2%	3%
Unlikely	16%	19%	15%	18%	12%	10%
Very unlikely	64%	58%	65%	60%	80%	78%
Don't know / Not sure	4%	4%	3%	6%	2%	7%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Very likely	7%	18%	10%	6%	2%	1%
Likely	9%	19%	12%	7%	4%	3%
Unlikely	16%	20%	19%	19%	15%	12%
Very unlikely	64%	39%	51%	64%	75%	83%
Don't know / Not sure	4%	4%	9%	5%	5%	1%

The City of Seattle uses a public funding model for its elections, called “democracy vouchers”. Before an election, each voter is sent four vouchers worth \$25 each. They can allocate these vouchers to the candidates that they support, or recycle them if there are no candidates they wish to support.

If Australia adopted a voucher system, and you received four vouchers each worth \$25 before the next federal election, how likely or unlikely is it that you would use some or all of the vouchers to support political parties or candidates?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>
Very likely	18%	23%	13%	15%	19%	16%	16%
Likely	22%	20%	23%	23%	22%	18%	23%
Unlikely	12%	13%	12%	12%	11%	14%	16%
Very unlikely	34%	34%	34%	34%	34%	38%	30%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	11%	18%	15%	14%	14%	15%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
Very likely	18%	22%	13%	22%	16%	7%
Likely	22%	23%	21%	28%	12%	15%
Unlikely	12%	13%	14%	11%	15%	6%
Very unlikely	34%	28%	39%	24%	44%	48%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	15%	13%	15%	13%	24%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18–29</i>	<i>30–39</i>	<i>40–49</i>	<i>50–59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Very likely	18%	26%	17%	19%	12%	14%
Likely	22%	34%	30%	18%	11%	15%
Unlikely	12%	10%	14%	14%	13%	13%
Very unlikely	34%	17%	24%	37%	44%	44%
Don't know / Not sure	15%	13%	15%	13%	19%	14%

The City of New York uses a different public funding model for its elections, called “multiple matching”. Before an election, voters who make small donations to a candidate can have their donations topped up by public money. For example, if eligible, a \$175 donation would become \$1,050 thanks to public funding.

If Australia adopted a multiple matching system, and your small donation to a candidate would be topped up by public money, how likely or unlikely is it that you would make a political donation to a political party or candidate at the next federal election?

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Very likely	8%	12%	5%	8%	7%	6%	7%
Likely	15%	14%	17%	19%	19%	13%	9%
Unlikely	16%	17%	15%	18%	15%	13%	22%
Very unlikely	48%	48%	49%	44%	48%	54%	45%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	10%	15%	11%	12%	14%	17%

	<i>Total</i>	Labor	Coalition	Greens	One Nation	Other
Very likely	8%	12%	7%	7%	2%	0%
Likely	15%	16%	15%	24%	8%	6%
Unlikely	16%	17%	15%	22%	17%	6%
Very unlikely	48%	41%	53%	36%	66%	64%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	13%	10%	10%	8%	23%

	<i>Total</i>	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
Very likely	8%	21%	8%	6%	6%	2%
Likely	15%	27%	23%	23%	5%	3%
Unlikely	16%	21%	17%	16%	11%	15%
Very unlikely	48%	19%	36%	46%	62%	70%
Don't know / Not sure	12%	12%	15%	9%	16%	10%