

Media Release

from the fundraising sector

FIA warns of red tape danger in proposed electoral reform legislation

Sydney, 9 February 2018: Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) has made two recent submissions to the Federal Government concerning proposed legislation that could significantly harm the fundraising sector.

“While FIA supports the broad policy objectives of these reforms – to protect the integrity of Australia’s electoral system – we are concerned about potential unintended consequences for charitable fundraising,” said FIA CEO Rob Edwards.

The electoral reform bill targets “political campaigners” for tighter restrictions on their ability to accept donations. Many charities that are not principally ‘advocacy’ organisations had assumed they would fall outside the definition of ‘political campaigners’ as described in the bill. However, as the debate unfolds, it is becoming clearer that even charities whose mission is mainly, for example, in support of healthcare could be labelled ‘political campaigners’ if they were to take a public position on a matter of contested public policy. For example, some FIA members that are not traditionally known for their advocacy work took a public stance on the recent Same Sex Marriage debate. Under the proposed bill, that activity would likely draw them into the regulatory net established by the legislation. FIA submits that further public consultation is needed in order for these organisations to fully understand the implications of the legislation for their fundraising and advocacy activities.

Under the proposed legislation, charities who do advocacy would have to declare **on a register any donors** who give over \$10,000 even if the donation is for non-advocacy purposes. This is likely to do considerable harm to major gift and bequest fundraising, as many wealthy individuals will be reluctant, for privacy reasons, to have their names placed on the public record.

If passed in its current form, the bill would add considerably to the red tape burden on charities, affecting not only donations from overseas, but domestic fundraising as well. For example, a fundraiser working for a charity that has been designated a ‘political campaigner’ would be required to obtain statutory declarations from all donors over \$250 and have them witnessed to establish whether or not they are ‘allowable donors’.

“Fundraising is already a very challenging occupation and involves a significant investment by charities who commit to professional fundraising programs,” said Mr. Edwards. “Putting more hurdles between the donor and the cause will only make it more difficult for charities to acquire the funds they need to pursue their missions.”

FIA’s recent submissions can be viewed here: <https://www.fia.org.au/pages/latest-submission.html>

About Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA)

With over 1500 members, Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) is the largest representative body for the \$12.5 billion fundraising sector which is supported by some 14.9 million Australians. FIA members include charities and other fundraising not-for-profits operating domestically and internationally, as well as the organisations and professionals that provide services to them. FIA advocates for the interests of the sector, administers a self-regulatory Code, educates fundraising practitioners, promotes research, and creates forums for the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

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