

25 January 2018

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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Dear Secretary

Submission to the Inquiry into the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017

The Brotherhood of St Laurence writes to register with the committee its concern about the proposed broad terms of the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017, and its impact on community organisations registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

As an organisation that has been advocating with and for disadvantaged Australians for more than 80 years, not only representing but enabling vulnerable people to speak for themselves, we believe the unintended consequences of the proposed legislation would be to limit the valuable advocacy of civil society in the public domain. We are also concerned about the proposed addition of extra layers of regulatory burden to a sector that is already highly accountable through other robust mechanisms.

We acknowledge the importance of protecting the integrity of the Australian political system; however, to constrain charities in conducting advocacy activities, speaking on behalf of people who often have no voice or access to public forums that other citizens utilise, would not serve this purpose.

We urge that all community organisations registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) be exempted from the proposed legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our view on this matter of principle.

Yours sincerely

(Prof.) Shelley Mallett

General Manager, Research and Policy Centre