

Transparency International media release 20 September 2007 (draft only)

Let an independent umpire set the rules on electoral finance, says anticorruption watchdog.

“Transparency International New Zealand considers that New Zealand must establish an independent commission to set the rules for election spending” said the New Zealand Chairman of TI today to the Parliamentary committee looking at the Electoral Finance Bill.

“It is obvious that the financing of elections is central to the functioning of an effective democratic system. Rules need to be set and these must reflect best practice procedures for financial management. The rule making body, similar to that recommended in the Wallace Commission, would be de-commissioned as soon as it had done its job” the TINZ chairman, Gerald McGhie said.

Transparency International NZ was called on to give evidence by the committee following their written submission which drew extensively on the global Transparency International view of politics and money, and how the two intersect in a modern democracy. The submission also reflected the conclusions of a recent Symposium organised by TINZ and the Institute of Policy Studies at Victoria University of Wellington.

The submission acknowledges that modern politics needs money to function properly, and that partial state-funding can be considered legitimate; that the identity of donors should be made clear to voters; and that consolidation of electoral machinery was a critical aspect of any proposed reforms.

Transparency International NZ said that New Zealanders should take pride that their country has a longstanding status for a non corrupt public sector but some of the practices uncovered after recent elections could affect that reputation.

Non-transparent electoral practices in New Zealand were highlighted by TINZ as far back as 2003. Later events confirm that the subject of electoral finance remains as unfinished business.

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The Transparency International written submission is available at the TINZ website at

<http://www.transparencynz.org.nz/TINZsubmissions.html>

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