

Donation reform recommended

Political parties would need to declare all donations over \$1,000 under a raft of changes recommended by a parliamentary inquiry.

Federal parliament's Electoral Matters Committee has released its report into the funding of political parties and election campaigns, finding Australia's political financing arrangements are in need of reform.

"While there is no evidence that the funding and disclosure system is being abused, the inquiry has provided an opportunity to strengthen and provide more confidence in the system," the report said.

"Transparency and accountability must remain central goals of our financing arrangements."

The committee wants any donations above \$1,000 to be disclosed. At present the current threshold is \$11,900.

It also wants single donations over \$100,000 to be disclosed to the Australian Electoral Commission within 14 days.

The committee has also proposed greater disclosure of political spending, which is currently disclosed as a block sum with no specific details.

A dissenting report from the Coalition members of the committee criticised some of the 30 recommendations, particularly the lowering of the declaration threshold which it said serves the interests of Labor, the Greens and their backers.

"[This] will significantly impact the ability of individuals to give donations to political parties without the potential for intimidation and harassment," it said.

Meanwhile the Greens expressed their disappointment that bans on donations from tobacco and alcohol companies would not be implemented.

"Prohibiting these industries from making political donations would be a first step in combating the corrupting influence of donations in politics," the Greens' report said. •

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DRESSED FOR SUCCESS: Fashion skills helping new migrants

Creativity assists with settlement

New arrivals from war torn countries like Sudan need more help to stay in school or gain meaningful work experience to avoid becoming involved in criminal activity, according to a former teenage refugee.

Nyadol Nyuon, who arrived with her family in Australia in 2005, knows from her own experience that more educational support is needed — especially in regional Australia — to help young people maximise their potential.

She is now an ambassador for The Social Studio in Melbourne which helps mostly African refugees gain hands-on experience in the fashion, retail and hospitality industries.

"A lot of young people from refugee backgrounds struggle when they go to high school, and since young people spend a lot of their time in high school this is an environment where, if more is invested in it, they can get more out of it," Ms Nyuon said.

She told a parliamentary inquiry into multiculturalism that giving more support to young people struggling at school could help them stay engaged and less likely to become involved with gangs and other criminal behaviour.

"So if we invest in schools and the education system we might also be countering some other issues in the community and maybe even stopping other things from happening in the future," she said.