

Brethren implicated in political ad funding

Posted Mon Oct 15, 2007 9:20pm AEST

ABC TV's *Four Corners*

program says it has evidence that members of the Exclusive Brethren religious group set up a shelf company to fund political advertisements.

Willmac Enterprises, a \$10 company set up by church member Mark Mackenzie, spent more than \$370,000 to promote the Brethren's agenda in the 2004 election.

The program says it has seen evidence of six major cash deposits into the company's bank account from Brethren elder and parliamentary lobbyist Warwick John.

It is also claimed church members funnelled tens of thousands of dollars in cash around the world in envelopes, possibly breaching customs regulations.

These donations to the company were not declared to the Australian Electoral Commission and are now being investigated by the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

In a statement to the program, Warwick John says he has never deposited any money into Willmac Enterprises and to suggest otherwise is a complete fallacy.

The church also denies it has spent money on funding political advertisements.

Exclusive Brethren spokesman Phil McNaughton told reporter Quentin McDermott none of the money was used for political purposes, even though he did not know where the money came from.

"No church funds were expended on political campaigns," he said.

"I know that the church funds are audited and that no money was ever given for political purposes."

Tags: [community-and-society](#), [religion-and-beliefs](#), [christianity](#), [government-and-politics](#), [political-parties](#), [liberal-party](#), [activism-and-lobbying](#), [australia](#)