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NATIONAL

Doubts on ads by firm linked to sect

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A \$10 COMPANY linked to the reclusive religious sect Exclusive Brethren may police probe over its funding of pro-Liberal political ads.

Australian Electoral Commission officials have sent a preliminary brief of inform Willmac Enterprises to the Australian Federal Police.

An AFP spokesman said no decision on whether to launch a formal investigation has been made.

Commission funding and disclosure director Kevin Bodel told a Senate committee yesterday that it had been investigating \$370,000 of pro-Liberal anti-Greens advertisements and leaflets in Tasmania, South Australia and Prime John Howard's Sydney seat of Bennelong before the 2004 election.

"It doesn't relate to the expenditure disclosure lodged by Willmac after the last election," Mr Bodel told the hearing.

"(Willmac's) third party disclosure of electoral expenditure is correct. That procedure is about as far as I can go."

"We pursued a line of inquiry and reached a point where we believed it would be best handled by the AFP, and at that point we referred the matter on, having collected a certain degree of evidence."

Willmac was established about a week before the October, 2004, election by Exclusive Brethren member Mark Mackenzie and closed 18 months later.

But Exclusive Brethren spokesman Tony McCorkell said the church was not a stakeholder in Willmac, therefore would not be involved in any AFP organisation.

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