

- [Home](#)
- [About GreensBlog](#)
- [GreensBloggers](#)
- [Comments Policy](#)

Search

[GreensBlog - the official blog of the Australian Greens Senators](#)

Blogging Greens issues, policies and politics

Feed on

[Posts](#)

[Comments](#)

[Exclusive Brethren, Restricted Democracy](#)

Oct 16th, 2007 by [Christine Milne](#)

If you didn't see last night's Four Corners on the Exclusive Brethren, I highly recommend that you [watch it online here](#) on Four Corners' excellent website.

It exposed in the clearest way we've seen yet the shadowy and, in some cases, illegal role that this extremist cult has played in Australian and overseas elections in recent years. They have channelled cash from around the world, amassing election war chests for advertising campaigns attacking the Greens and supporting John Howard, George Bush, NZ's Don Brash and the Swedish conservatives.

Now, of course, any citizen or group should be able to engage in election campaigning. That is everyone's basic democratic right. Questions over the Exclusive Brethren's decision to do so even though they forbid their members to vote, believing governments are raised up by God, are neither here nor there.

However, one of the fundamentals of democracy, as interviewee Peter Trainor said, is that "when we interpret a political message, part of interpreting that message is knowing who is presenting that message to us."

Now, the Brethren's modus operandi is to run ads that look like they are placed by concerned conservative individuals. They might suggest that they are from schools. Too often, they give false names and addresses as the official authorisation. They never explicitly state that they are from the Exclusive Brethren.

For our democracy to work effectively, we must have access to full information before we make our choices. And that includes information on how to assess and interpret what we are told. Australians will take a different message from the same ad on the pulp mill, for example, depending on whether it comes from its proponents, Gunns, or from a group indirectly funded by Gunns but calling itself "Timber Communities Australia".

The Exclusive Brethren are entitled to participate in Australian elections and to support John Howard and attack the Greens. But it is vital that any pro Howard or anti Green attacks are clearly labelled as coming from them so that Australian voters know the message is not from concerned individuals but from an extreme and shadowy cult: A cult whose schools are federally funded even though they do not allow their students to go on to tertiary education and who disallow computers. A cult who Prime Minister Howard has rewarded by exempting them from legislation such that they can ban unions in their workplaces.

Posted in [Christine Milne](#), [Election 07](#), [Exclusive Brethren](#), [Greens](#) | 9 Comments

9 Responses to "Exclusive Brethren, Restricted Democracy"



1. on 16 Oct 2007 at 1:41 pm [Jangari](#)

It was an excellent report, the sort of report that Walkleys are made of.

I sometimes have trouble coming to a clean division when it comes to legitimately questioning the proponent of a view and engaging in an ad hominem argument: when is it merely making an informed assessment of someone's stated view and when is it just playing the wo/man and not the ball?

Don't think I'm saying it's not okay to do so in this case; this is one of the more unequivocal cases and not the blurry middle-ground, but in other instances I see the same people attacking another's view for their affiliations one day, and another day defending someone else against similar attacks on grounds of character. I don't think there's a simple either-or solution to this, but a very broad um-ah-maybe area, like most things.

That's a little off point though. Some of the stuff shown on Four Corners was downright incontrovertibly illegal, such as using the front of a School (albeit very, very private) to place politically partisan election ads.

Forget Rudd's talks with Brian Burke, Howard's meeting with Bruce Hales ought to be fully and independently investigated.

2. on 16 Oct 2007 at 2:11 pm [2](#) xulon

For those who find that viewing it online isn't feasible, it's also repeated tonight at 11:35 pm

3. on 16 Oct 2007 at 6:57 pm [3](#) lyn

Knowing about the exclusive brethren, having escaped in 1969 & it was awful then, got dreadful as the years went by, Mr Howard has certainly had the wool pulled over his eyes regarding this cult. What needs to be done is for someone to have a one to one chat with him and open his eyes. They are not a lawful abiding citizens, they do split families. There are lots of folks in that cult who want out, but don't want to be separated from their loved ones.



4. on 16 Oct 2007 at 8:14 pm [4](#) [Tim Hollo](#)

That's terrible, Lyn. I do hope that things are getting better for you.

The thing is, the Brethren themselves have been having one on one chats with Howard. I suspect that we need a major change to get them out of the political process.

5. on 17 Oct 2007 at 12:10 am [5](#) Gary Franceschini

I'm leery about claims that 500K was spent here in the US for the last election - private individuals donate more than that, so I'm guessing the figure is wrong. Additionally, their beliefs are pretty mainstream for the conservative christian right here. They aren't doing anything that isn't any stranger than many other christian groups.

However, I am shocked that such a group put together 500K+ in New Zealand. That's a lot of money in a small country, and would have a huge impact on voters.

Generally, I don't like what I am seeing. My take is that I don't have an issue with the Brethren being involved in politics so long as it is transparent and accountable. But then, maybe I've just been here in the US for too long...

6. on 17 Oct 2007 at 1:05 am [6](#) Zoltar

Advocating a position and then not voting for it yourself, that's madness. Advocating a position and trying to dress it up as though it's coming from another organisation, that's just evil.

At least we can be thankful that this story was aired before the election and not after it, and relieved that the exclusive brethren don't vote. Hopefully media watch will be on the case checking the bonafides of electoral material.

7. on 17 Oct 2007 at 5:45 am [7](#) Daniel Taylor

I saw this 4 corners last night. WHat a great expose of this cult and these guys.
Great work Bob lets keep the media stuff going. Any publicity is good publicity as they say.

8. on 17 Oct 2007 at 8:14 am [8](#) lyn

Thanks for your comment Tim. Life has been good for me since 1969. I do feel John Howard may not have insight into the "goings on" in the EB. How can he be told what goes on when they are so closed. The young folk seem rude!
Kevin Rudd has seen through them and taken a stand against them which is what is needed and he hasn't been in their midst.

9. on 17 Oct 2007 at 10:10 am [9](#) [Hammy Goonan](#)

The Australian Centre for Democracy and Justice have had their eye on the EB for some time. You can check out our entry on them at our Lobbyocracy wiki at http://lobbyocracy.org/index.php?title=Exclusive_Brethren

[Trackback URI](#) | [Comments RSS](#)

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (hidden) (required)

Website



Submit Comment



• **Pages**

- [About GreensBlog](#)
- [GreensBloggers](#)
- [Comments Policy](#)

• **Recent Posts**

- [Low income families in marginal electorates](#)
- [Oil Proofing Australia](#)
- [Exclusive Brethren, Restricted Democracy](#)
- [LOL Pols - Competition](#)
- ["41 days to Sack Howard" - to his door](#)

• **LOL Pols**



• **Categories**

- [Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander](#)
- [Agriculture](#)
- [APEC](#)
- [Balance of Power](#)
- [Blogging](#)
- [Bob Brown](#)
- [Cartoons](#)
- [Christine Milne](#)
- [Climate change](#)
- [Coal](#)
- [Disability](#)
- [Drought](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Election 07](#)
- [Energy](#)
- [Exclusive Brethren](#)
- [Family & Community](#)
- [Fisheries](#)
- [Greens](#)
- [Heritage](#)
- [Housing Crisis](#)
- [Human Rights](#)
- [Immigration](#)
- [Industrial Relations](#)
- [Kerry Nettle](#)
- [Marine](#)
- [Nukes \(energy related\)](#)
- [Poverty](#)
- [Preferences](#)
- [Pulp Mill](#)
- [Rachel Siewert](#)
- [Renewable energy](#)
- [Senate](#)
- [solar PV](#)
- [solar thermal](#)
- [Sustainable Farming](#)
- [transport](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)
- [Web 2.0](#)
- [Welfare](#)
- [wind power](#)

• Recent Comments



[Robert Merkel](#) on [Oil Proofing Australia](#)



moonwise on [Low income families in margina...](#)



Gary on [Oil Proofing Australia](#)



Jeremy on [Low income families in margina...](#)



[Robert Merkel](#) on [Oil Proofing Australia](#)

• Greens Links

- [Australian Greens](#)
- [Australian Greens' YouTube](#)
- [Bob Brown](#)
- [Bob Brown's Facebook](#)
- [Bob Brown's MySpace](#)
- [Bob Brown's YouTube](#)
- [Christine Milne](#)
- [Christine Milne's Facebook](#)
- [Christine Milne's YouTube](#)
- [Kerry Nettle](#)

- [Kerry Nettle's Facebook](#)
- [Kerry Nettle's MySpace](#)
- [Rachel Siewert](#)
- [Rachel Siewert's YouTube](#)

• Official sites

- [Australian Parliament](#)
- [Check your enrolment](#)
- [Electoral Commission](#)
- [Hansard](#)

• You might like...

- [ABC's election 2007](#)
- [An Onymous Lefty](#)
- [Blogocracy](#)
- [Crooked Timber](#)
- [Dead Roo](#)
- [Deltoid](#)
- [GetUp!](#)
- [Hoyden about town](#)
- [John Quiggin](#)
- [Larvatus Prodeo](#)
- [Oz Politics](#)
- [Paradigm Oz](#)
- [Possum's Pollytics](#)
- [Real Climate](#)
- [Road to Surfdom](#)
- [Source Watch](#)
- [Tasmanian Times](#)
- [The view from Benambra](#)

• Archives

- [October 2007](#)
- [September 2007](#)
- [August 2007](#)

• Meta

- [Login](#)
- [Entries RSS](#)
- [Comments RSS](#)
- [WordPress.com](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#) | Theme: MistyLook by [Sadish](#)

»