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Electoral Office investigation into Exclusive Brethren-linked spending to continue, but police not called in

14th Feb 07

Revised with additions

The Australian Electoral Commission has not finalised its inquiry into massive pro-government and anti-Greens spending by people linked with the secretive Exclusive Brethren sect in the 2004 federal election.

The AEC told Senate Estimates committee hearings last night that Willmac Enterprises, registered less than a month before the October 2004 poll, spent more than \$300,000 on (anti-Greens) advertising and pamphlets in NSW, South Australia and Tasmania.

Seven electoral items identified by Senator Bob Brown to the AEC were funded by Willmac. However these items account for only half of Willmac's total election spending. The investigation is continuing.

Willmac Enterprises moved from North Rocks in Sydney to Lake Cargellico in western NSW before closing down on 25 September 2006. The company had 10 shares for which \$10 was paid, held beneficially by Mark William Mackenzie of 11 Baden Powell Place, North Rocks NSW 2151. Senator Brown says that this address was unoccupied at the time of the 2004 election.

A senior AEC officer told the Senate that "we're making further inquiries" but he would not disclose the nature of the inquiries.

The Exclusive Brethren forbid voting.

The Electoral Act requires all donors to companies or other entities involved in elections to be disclosed.

"The question is: how could a company worth \$10 pay \$300,000 for electioneering?" Senator Brown said.

"The inquiry is far too slow and unsatisfactory. The Australian Federal Police should have been asked to assist," Greens Leader Bob Brown said.

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