

Religious sect 'funding adult store fight'

By Julian Drape
May 20, 2007 03:43pm

Article from: AAP

A NSW council will use money from a secretive religious sect to appeal against a court decision allowing a sex shop to go ahead, says an adult industry association.

The Lithgow City Council has been accused of allowing the Exclusive Brethren to bankroll its legal case against an adult store after a local businessman offered to pay for a barrister to represent the council in the Supreme Court.

Eros Association executive Fiona Patten said the payment would be seen as "tantamount to bribery" and said she believed the money was coming from the Exclusive Brethren.

"Everyone knows that it is the Exclusive Brethren who are behind this offer and that it is a religious sect trying to buy influence and favour for its moral agenda," she said.

Mayor Neville Castle said he did not know if the businessman was a member of the Exclusive Brethren and council investigations found there was no impediment to the donation.

The council's general manager, Paul Anderson, discussed the funding possibility with "the people" behind the offer last week, he said.

The Flirt Adult Store won an appeal against the Lithgow City Council in the Land and Environment Court after the council refused to approve its operations in the town's main street.

Mr Castle said the council opposed the sex shop on planning grounds, not on moral principles.

The Exclusive Brethren is said to boast about 40,000 members worldwide – many based in New Zealand and Australia – and has been accused of underhanded campaigning against the Greens at the 2004 federal election and subsequent state polls.

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