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Sect's protests don't stack up

Wednesday, 18 April 2007, 2:02 pm

Press Release: New Zealand Government

Sect's protests don't stack up

Moves by the Australian Exclusive Brethren to distance itself from the covert activities of New Zealand members in the 2005 election don't stack up, Justice Minister Mark Burton said today.

"The fact is that in Australia Exclusive Brethren have had to answer claims that they used similar tactics to try and sway the outcome of elections on that side of the Tasman.

"New Zealanders should take their comments with more than a few grains of salt. "On the one hand they're arguing that they didn't know what New Zealand members were doing, yet on the other hand they're supporting attacks by local members on proposed reform of electoral finance rules.

"New Zealanders should be wary of these attempts to set the ground work for more covert action in the lead-up to the 2008 election.

"Planned changes to the electoral funding rules aim to create a fair, transparent and open system that New Zealanders can have confidence in.

"Alongside a number of comparable democracies, New Zealand's current rules around third party advertising mean our system is more open to abuse from secretive wealthy interest groups.

"It is vital that all New Zealanders know who is involved in our politics and have a fair opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

"What we're now seeing from those who have shown a desire to exercise undue influence in the past is a growing realisation that the next election will be contested in a more accountable and transparent system."

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