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# GetUp Submission to the Joint Standing Commission on Election Matters inquiry into the 2019 Federal Election

*Taking back our Democracy*



The people-powered movement working to take back our  
democracy from the control of billionaires and corporations.

Page 3 of this submission was amended on 1 December 2020  
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People. Power. Impact.



## About GetUp

**The GetUp movement is powered by the values and hopes of everyday people.**

**By combining the power of one million members, movement partners and a central team of expert strategists, we work to have extraordinary impact on the issues that matter.**

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GetUp members come from every walk of life, coming together around a shared belief in fairness, compassion and courage. It is GetUp members who set our movement's agenda on the issues they care about, in the areas of Environmental Justice, Human Rights, First Nations Justice, Economic Fairness and Democratic Integrity. Our work is driven by our shared values, not party politics.

GetUp is an independent, not for profit community campaigning organisation, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. GetUp receives no political party or government funding, and every campaign we run is entirely supported by voluntary donations.

GetUp's purpose is set out in our constitution – to advance progressive public policy in Australia. We do this by empowering everyday people to have their say.

Since the introduction of the *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Act 2018*, which created the category of Political Campaigner, GetUp is registered as a Political Campaigner with the Australian Election Commission.

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## Our independence

Getup is fiercely independent and proud of it.

We've been accused in the past of being aligned with particular political parties. But nothing can be further from the truth.

Following politically-motivated attacks on GetUp's independence, including by hard-right Liberal Party Senator Eric Abetz, the AEC has investigated whether or not GetUp is an 'associated entity' three times, as recently as February 2019, and every single time the AEC has found we are not associated with any political party.

### GetUp's work is driven by values, not party politics.

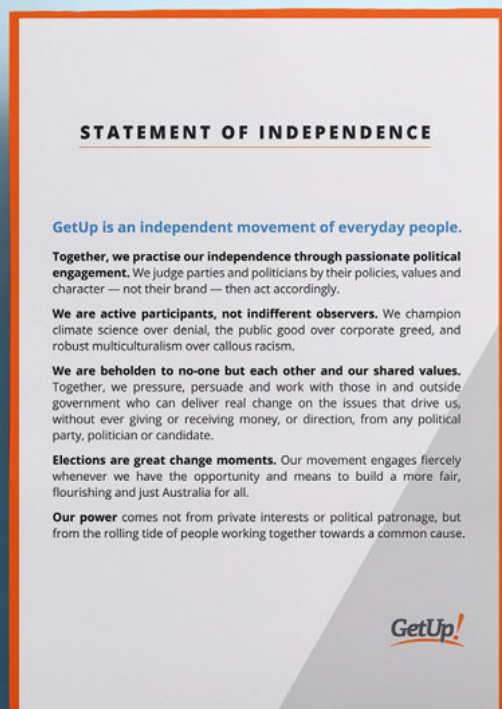
**GetUp's campaigns are 100% issues based**, whether it's demanding action on climate change, standing up for Medevac laws or protecting the ABC, we empower everyday people to participate in politics.

**GetUp plays an important role** in providing people with multiple, meaningful options to vote on the issues on election day.

**GetUp does not, and has not ever, received funding from political parties.** We've never given it either!

The fact that an organisation advocates an agenda on one side of the political spectrum does not mean it is operating for the benefit of any or all registered political parties on that side of the spectrum.

**GetUp is also guided by a Statement of Independence, which defines us as an active values-led participant in our politics, independent from the control, direction or influence of political parties and politicians.**



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## Transparency

GetUp goes above and beyond our legal and regulatory requirements for transparency, and is more transparent than political parties.

Since the introduction of the *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Act 2018*, GetUp's disclosure requirements with the AEC as a Political Campaigner are the same for political parties and associated entities.

But GetUp also takes additional voluntary steps - **such as having a lower threshold for disclosing large gifts and real time disclosure of ALL income.**

GetUp's donations are transparent, and while it certainly throws us open to increased scrutiny, the fact is it's the standard that all political players should meet. You can [log onto our website at any time](#) and see a real time snapshot of what our members are up to and how much has been donated.



## Taking back our democracy

The 2019 Federal election saw Big Money play a more significant role than ever before as Australia shifted to US-style campaigning, in which billionaires like Clive Palmer were able to drown out opponents through unprecedented campaign spending.

This election was the most expensive on record, with spending by major parties believed to be higher than ever. However, both the Coalition and Labor (and the Greens, One Nation, Centre Alliance and everyone else) were outspent by Clive Palmer's United Australia Party.<sup>1</sup>

This meant that the voices of ordinary Australians were often drowned out.

GetUp and its members have long advocated for an end to the influence of big money in our politics. The 2019 election was the direct result of the failure to take action against big money.

“**41% of Australians are dissatisfied with our democracy.**”<sup>2</sup>

“

Before the election, **73% of Australians supported limiting how much money political parties can spend and how much they can accept as donations.** <sup>2</sup>

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It's time to end the influence of money and billionaires over Australian politics.

It's time for Members of Parliament to say 'No' to the corporations and billionaires who seek to control our politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter McCutcheon, Clive Palmer to spend \$60 million on election campaign advertising blitz, senator claims, ABC News, 1 May 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Gerry Stokes, Mark Evans and Max Halupka, Democracy 2025: Trust and Democracy in Australia, December 2018.



## Our Vision

**Our vision for Australia's democracy is a nation in which all people, regardless of their race, background or income, can participate equally in the political process.**

We believe that everyday people working together and chipping in what they can afford to help create the change they want to see is democracy at its very best. Australia must rebuild a completely transparent system of political finance that amplifies the small donations of everyday people.

### **Five point plan to rebuild our democracy:**

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**Stop the money game:** Cap the amount any individual or corporation can donate at \$1000 per financial year, and introduce expenditure caps on election campaigns to remove incentives to amass huge political fighting funds.

**End the shroud of secrecy:** Require all donations above \$500 to be publicly disclosed on the internet in real-time, including donations to and from affiliated entities.

**A corruption watchdog with teeth:** Create an independent federal corruption watchdog with broad investigative powers.

**Close the revolving door:** Prevent Members of Parliament from engaging in lobbying work while they are in office and for a period of three years after they leave office.

**Disinformation:** While upholding the principle of Freedom of Speech, political actors must be held accountable for disseminating misleading material.

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These relevant reforms must be applied fairly and proportionately to political parties, independent candidates, associated entities, political campaigners and third-party organisations, including GetUp. Together, they will help to foster a rich diversity of voices, competing in a vibrant battlefield of ideas – a vision set out in our Constitution’s guarantee of representative government.

**Getting Big Money out of politics isn’t about being progressive or conservative. It’s about democracy. Since 2016, the Parliament has acted to ban donations from foreign entities so we know reform is possible.**

Many of these reforms have already been introduced in State jurisdictions. NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT all require disclosure of donations above \$1000.

NSW has donations to political parties and third-parties capped at \$6300 annually. Victoria has donations capped at \$4000 over a four-year cycle.

NSW, South Australia and the ACT all have expenditure caps on election expenditure.

NSW and Victoria disclose donations every 21 days and South Australia and the ACT disclose donations weekly.



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# Election 2019 by the numbers

**In 2019, GetUp members spoke to more voters than ever before. We reached voters that had never heard from us before.**

Thousands of GetUp members worked to make sure that our top five issues (as chosen by GetUp's members) - urgent climate action, transition to renewables, immediate evacuation of refugees from Manus and Nauru, funding of government services, and protecting the ABC and SBS - were kept on the agenda.



**9,433** volunteers put **37 404 hours** of volunteer time



**3595** volunteers handed out How to Vote cards at **335 polling booths**



**16 768** members took their **first GetUp action**







## What we achieved

**Change in Warringah:** We helped create this shift. Tony Abbott said that "climate change itself is probably doing good" and blocked climate action at every opportunity. GetUp members knocked on more doors in Warringah than any other target seat to ensure his outdated views were no longer influencing our parliament.

**Recruited 16,768 members:** This huge amount of new members took their first action during the campaign.

**First Nations work in remote communities:** Our First Nations team worked in remote communities for the first time. The team travelled over 4,000 Km, having over 2,500 conversations at 11 polling stations in the Northern Territory. A further 125,000 people in communities like Parkes NSW, Durrack WA, Lecihardt and Herbert Far North Queensland were reached via social advertising.

**Colour Code:** (National movement of multicultural, migrant and First Nations peoples established by GetUp) successfully engaged multicultural communities working in languages other than English. This included direct mail, letterbox campaigns, phonebanking, door-knocking and on election day.

“ **GetUp** is such a great place **for people to have a voice** and become aware of issues they may not have been aware of. ”

- Jane M, NSW

## How GetUp is funded

In the lead-up to the election, just over 47 000 everyday Australians - mums and dads, teachers and nurses - chipped in an average of \$24 per donation to help create the change they want to see.

### These contributions funded:

- **Billboards** in key electorates across the country
- **TV, Cinema, Radio** and **Spotify** advertising
- A **Social Media** campaign with over 15 million impressions
- A massive volunteer-driven **phone calling** and door **knocking program**
- 800 000 issue-based **How-to-Vote cards**

Unlike most political parties, GetUp discloses our donations in real time. Our website has a real-time snapshot of our fundraising efforts. Check in anytime: [getup.org.au/about/powering-getup](https://getup.org.au/about/powering-getup)

While the GetUp movement is **95% funded by small contributions (under \$100) from our members** – from time to time we receive a larger gift. Like any independent third-party organisation, GetUp is required by law to disclose the identity of any donors who give over \$13,200 for election purposes in a financial year. These disclosures, however, take up to 18 months – and we believe democracy should be more transparent than that. We publish the details of all donations over \$10,000 on our website within 30 days of receiving them.

Since the introduction of the *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Act 2018*, GetUp is no longer accepting donations from foreign entities for electoral matters. Prior to that, donations from foreign entities amounted to less than [1.1%] of GetUp's donations.



## So who is GetUp?

GetUp is an independent organisation made up of ordinary Australians who believe that everyday people have an important place in our politics.



“ It’s a great feeling **being involved & meeting like-minded people**. You don’t need special skills, just a positive attitude and a smile! ”

- Trish, NSW

“

It gives **ordinary citizens a voice** amongst the privileged few funding political parties.

- Chris C, NSW

”



“ I am a member because our government should be working for us, not for vested interests. Getup is important because it gives **ordinary people an opportunity to fight for a more just and fair society**. ”

- Mirin, VIC

“

Getup is my voice.

- Angela A, VIC

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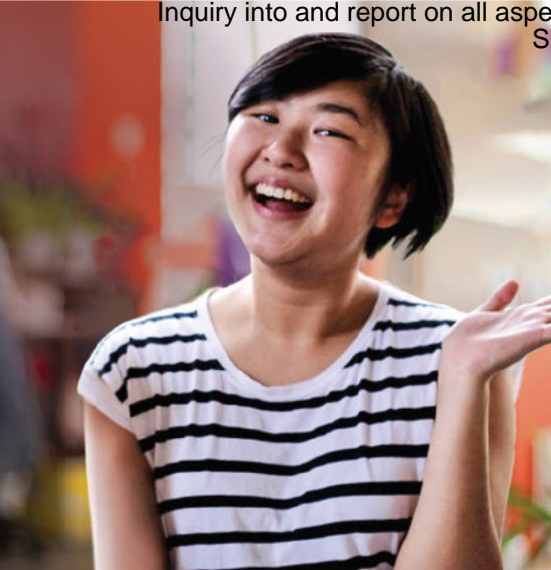
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Colour Code and GetUp gives marginalised groups a **platform to fight for the inequality** they see in politics.

- Sara, VIC

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**GetUp gives me hope** that all sorts of people, no matter their gender, race, income, sexuality, health or ability, can work together to create a future worth fighting for.

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- Lucy, NSW

“It gives me, for the **first time in my life, a say in the process,** and I'm nearly 70.”

- Chelsi B, QLD

“GetUp presents a way of being involved with other people in improving society and **fighting for a more positive future.**”

- Roy, WA



“**Getup is hope** in today's political climate.”

- Das, VIC

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“Right now, we need to take **action on climate change** - its everyone's future. GetUp is at the forefront of this fight.”

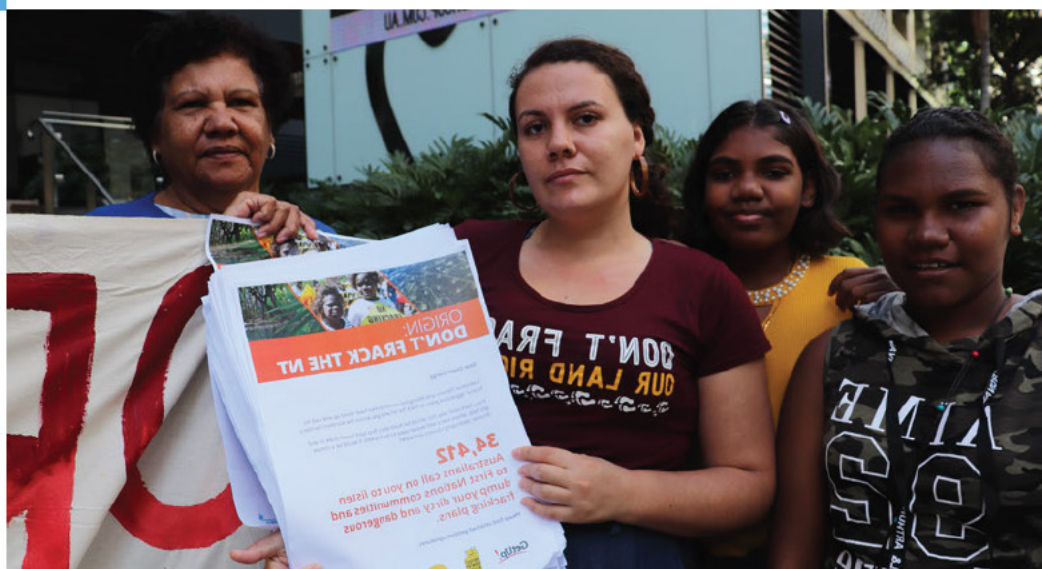
- Tori, SA



“GetUp's working in remote communities to listen and **amplify the voices of First Nations.**”

- Riss, QLD

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# GetUp Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the 2019 Federal Election

## Appendix 1 - Submissions from GetUp Members

### Submission 1

Dear Parliamentary Committee Members,

For the first time ever I volunteered with GetUp during the 2019 election election. I am a 60 year old nurse and felt strongly that we needed a change in Government if there was any hope of legislative action on climate change. I felt I had a moral responsibility to do something for the sake of future generations, including my children.

GetUp did target the seat in Boothby, the only marginal seat in SA, as a strategy to remove a supporter of hard-right politics. I participated in calling residents in the Boothby area (where I live) and although I didn't feel comfortable making these cold calls, I did see it was important to try to engage with fellow residents, understand what they felt were the important issues in the election and provide information about how our current member (Ms Flint) had voted on issues that may have been of concern for that person. In my mind, we were not targeting Nicole as an individual, but as a member of a party who was not voting in parliament in a way that I felt represented me or many others in the electorate.

I met many other GetUp volunteers during the election campaign, and let me tell you we were a pretty ordinary bunch. Mostly older men and woman, often retired professionals, who also felt the need to act, mainly in relation to climate change but more broadly in wanting to see a more fair and just Australia.

During the election campaign, GetUp came under fire many times and I guess that is what is to be expected during election campaigns when different interest groups get involved. However the media attention GetUp has attracted since the election, I think gives a very negative and unsubstantiated view of GetUp. I personally felt insulted regarding the unsubstantiated claims made, particularly by Nicole Flint. For example, where is the evidence that it was members of GetUp that egged her office or defaced her signs? I believe GetUp is being targeted as the Government feels threatened by such a large group of individuals coming together demanding action on issues they disagree with.

I joined GetUp because I want to belong to a group of people who are trying to work towards a fair, flourishing and just country in this time of transition. I am proud to be a part of a group that explicitly expects volunteers to act in a non-violent, respectful manner. I will continue to volunteer for GetUp as there is a Climate Emergency taking place and there is currently not the political will to address this issue.

Mary, Seacliff, SA

## Submission 2

I am a semi-retired counsellor and physical therapist who has been an active GetUp volunteer for two years. I have been concerned for many years about the direction of our country with the hateful divisiveness of the political world. GetUp offers a strong counter balance to the often inhumane policies of the current government and I find it empowering to be joined with like-minded people in disagreeing with their policies.. I joined the campaign in my local Boothby area as I believe that the incumbent is not representing me in Canberra and someone else could do a much better job.

My experience of the campaign is a mixture of frustration and exhilaration. I found Ms. Flint to be a very poor candidate. She was only ever interested in speaking from a script and would not answer reasonable legitimate questions in public forums. The article in The Australian by David Penberthy is a terrible biased smear of assumptions and innuendo about how horrible GetUp were towards Ms. Flint. Given the nature of the people I worked with in GetUp ,she seems to be seriously awry with her views . The people I worked with were always respectful, polite and persistent in seeking Ms. Flint's views on a range of issues, which she continually refused to address. Every GetUp person was horrified at the level of childish attacks on her and vehemently condemned them publicly and privately. Most of my co-volunteers stated that they would not support GetUp if the organisation had any role in the attacks.It is extremely ironic for Ms. Flint to complain about bullying and misogynistic abuse when she represents a party riddled with such behaviour, as the experiences of Ms. Bishop, Ms. Sudmalis, Ms. Banks and other women, reveal.

I felt uplifted by the massive efforts of common everyday quiet achievers who volunteer for GetUp. We are decent citizens who love our country and want a say in our democracy, as is our right. It is frustrating to have such concerned caring citizens smeared by Ms. Flint and her journalist associate as there is no evidence of any of the attacks being committed by GetUp members and she should be ashamed of herself.

Paul, Edwardstown, SA

### Submission 3

I am a recently graduated Psychologist currently working part-time as a Support Worker for people with disabilities. I have been with GetUp! for 2 years and I am a GetUp! member because I would like to make a difference creating positive change in Australia where everyone gets a better go and that we have a bright future to look forward to by addressing Climate Change.

I was motivated to get involved in the 2019 election campaign as I could see that particular political issues such as Climate Change and a fair go for all Australians was not being addressed by some candidates in my area of Boothby.

My experience of the 2019 campaign was both positive and negative. The positive experiences of the campaign were calling residents and discussing their concerns about issues that they care about and which effect them and where they would consider voting based on their concerns.

Another positive experience was all the people from GetUp! that were involved in the 2019 campaign are a caring group of mainly older experienced people. Some of the accounts that Boothby candidate Nicolle Flint claims to be caused by GetUp! do not describe any actions of the many dedicated heartfelt volunteers who I personally know that worked hard outside of their other commitments. GetUp! policies and work ethics for volunteers are strict about personal conduct and are lead by the S.A Organiser who overlooked all actions. Any GetUp! members that do not follow the code of ethics that GetUp! outlines lose their membership.

My negative experiences occurred when giving out GetUp! Information cards at the Pre-poll booth of Colonel Light Gardens where Sam Duluk, the Liberal member for Waite, behaved in a bullying and misogynistic way towards me which caused me to feel very uncomfortable. He illegally blocked the entrance to the polling booth forcing voters to walk around him before they could enter the polling booth. He attempted to stop me from offering an information card to my friendly neighbour by telling me to `leave her alone' as witnessed by six other volunteers from other organisations outside the booth. Mr. Duluk regularly appeared supporting Ms. Flint at public forums, continually stepping in to answer polite reasonable legitimate questions that she couldn't or wouldn't answer. His behaviour towards me was appalling, he was aggressive and overbearing in his manner and he tried to bully me.

I find it very ironic that Ms. Flint has complained so bitterly about abuse she blames on GetUp! members without any evidence whatsoever while representing a party that condones bullying and misogynistic behaviour as I experienced from her fellow Liberal party ally.

Raquel, Edwardstown, SA.

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## Submission 4

I'm Peter Combe and one of Australia's best known children's singer/songwriters.

Many Australians and their children have grown up listening to my songs. I have dedicated my life to making children's lives better through music.

However, the idea that there might not be a healthy planet for the children growing up in this century to inhabit is not just unthinkable, it's unconscionable. Having 7 grand children, makes me even more determined to do something about it.

With the science being so clear, the lack of action on climate change by our government, while at the same time pretending that it's doing something, is frightening. This prompted me to get active in this election and I joined with GetUp to launch their campaign for Boothby.

As I said at the time, "I don't know Nicolle Flint at all, she's probably a lovely person. But if people are advocating for coal I don't want them to be in Parliament."

So I did what I do best. I sang songs. If I can lend my skills and talent to help change people's minds on the impending climate crisis, I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

Peter Combe, SA