

# Developers big donors

## Call to reform political party gifts

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PROPERTY developers with major Hunter projects have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to NSW Labor in the past year, prompting calls for reforms.

Greens MP Lee Rhiannon said figures released by the Australian Electoral Commission yesterday revealed the ALP collected a record amount in gifts from developers in the lead-up to the 2007 federal election.

"NSW Labor picked up over \$2 million in donations and some of the biggest donors were Hunter property developers," she said.

"Hunter Land Pty Ltd gave NSW Labor \$110,000.

"Rosecorp Pty Ltd, the Catherine Hill Bay developer, gave \$110,000 to the NSW ALP, a massive increase from previous years."

■ **POLITICAL** parties have been able to hide millions of dollars in secret gifts, because of changes to electoral laws.

At least \$127 million went to political parties in 2006-07 through a combination of gifts, investments, taxpayer funding and contributions from affiliated organisations.

Ms Rhiannon said Hunter community groups could not compete with the "kind of influence these developer donations can buy".

But Hunter Land's Hilton Grugeon said he also gave to independents and wanted to support candidates he thought were good for the community.

"I have never donated one cent in exchange for anything - that's not what it's about," he said.

Ms Rhiannon said it was time for an overhaul of gifts and the developer organis-

Under law changes imposed by the Howard government in 2006, parties and donors need only disclose gifts greater than \$10,300, against the previous limit of \$1500.

Special Minister of State John Faulkner vowed to scrap the \$10,300 threshold, saying it hurt the electoral system. AAP

ation Urban Taskforce agreed. A Rosecorp spokesman said founder Bob Rose made his position clear through the taskforce, of which he was chair.

"Political donations should be banned outright from everyone, including the mining and petroleum sectors, the timber industry, the gun lobby, environmental campaigners and other interest groups," the group said.

But Premier Morris Iemma dismissed talk of developer influence as nonsense.