

greensnswmember says:
[March 30, 2012 at 13:41](#)

Posts for the blogs of Lee Rhiannon and Justin Field: Issue of speaking to the media when there is policy difference between the Australian Greens and NSW Greens.

Kevin asked most candidates how they would deal with this situation when a journalist asked them a question that involved a policy difference between these two divisions of the Greens.

Lee Rhiannon and Justin Field have given very detailed and thoughtful answers to Kevin's question. Both have shown that this is a very complex issue and there are no simple answers.

Chris Maltby gave much attention to Justin's answer, posting four different times on Justin's blog. In sharp contrast to Justin and Lee, Chris appears to believe the issue isn't complex and there are narrow black and white answers. I agree with Justin and Lee, but not with Chris.

Let me illustrate some of this complexity by a concrete example.

Paul Barry wrote an item on The Power Index in which he talked about Lee Rhiannon being hypocritical when it came to Graeme Wood's \$1.68 million contribution to the Greens.
<http://www.thepowerindex.com.au/power-move/money-palmer/20120202979> This item was repeated on Crikey. <http://www.crikey.com.au/2012/02/02/paul-barry-greens-meet-libs-on-donations-hypocrisy/>

After considerable thought and consultation I submitted a response to Barry's charge of Lee's hypocrisy to Crikey. Crikey published it <http://www.crikey.com.au/2012/02/07/greens-we-are-not-hypocrites-when-it-comes-to-donations/> and sent it onto The Power Index's editor who also published it. <http://www.thepowerindex.com.au/opinion/greens-ask-if-million-dollar-donation-was-worth-the-trouble>

You will see that I defended Lee and pointed out that she had no role in the acceptance of the Wood donation. I explained that we are a confederation of eight state and territory parties, and the NSW Greens has our own policy on donations.

This item on Crikey and The Power Index is critical of the acceptance by the Australian Greens of the Wood money. By implication many people will infer it is critical of our federal leader Bob Brown.

So I have two questions for Lee and Justin.

I'm not an elected member of any parliament or local government council, nor would I ever want to be. Yet, due to the extensive media coverage the Democracy4Sale project was received over the ten years that I was the project director, I'm seen by many people in the wider community as a very close colleague of Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon.

1) Therefore, was it inappropriate for me to submit this item for publication in two widely read online journals?

Jeremy Buckingham was asked by a Sydney Morning Herald reporter for his views on allowing affiliation fees to continue to be paid to political parties while banning contributions

from all corporations and other organisations. His answer was clearly a statement of the current policy of the NSW Greens. However, he was widely criticised in our party for making these statements.

2) Therefore, was Jeremy Buckingham acting more inappropriately than I was? If so, how?

In conclusion, Kevin's question leads to very complex decisions that our elected politicians must make within a political party that values transparency, grassroots democracy, individual rights and freedom of expression.

[Reply](#)

-  *greensnswmember* says:

[March 30, 2012 at 14:08](#)

Sorry. I meant to sign my name to the above post re: speaking to journalists. Today has been a very hectic one!

It was written by Norman Thompson, Inner Sydney Greens.

[Reply](#)

-  *Lee Rhiannon* says:

[April 2, 2012 at 15:42](#)

Thanks for supporting me Norman on this allegation by Crikey. I don't think the two examples are comparable. One was a non-MP [yourself] expressing a view about a particular donation. The other was an MP speaking in the media about an issue that was not within his portfolio area.

-  *greensnswmember* says:

[April 11, 2012 at 09:59](#)

Hi Norman

They are curious questions you have raised and I thank you for posing them. When you are writing for Crickey and New Matilda I guess you are seen as a spokesperson and expert on these matters. As you say, you do consult. I am wondering if you consult with the Democracy 4 Sale team when you write articles like this, or is it all a lot less formal than that?

Cheers

Sandra Heilpern

[Reply](#)



- [Norman Thompson](#) says:

[April 11, 2012 at 12:19](#)

Hi Sandra,

During my ten years as director of the NSW Greens Democracy4Sale project I never published anything without running it by Lee Rhiannon and her office since the project was always co-ordinated by her office. I knew at all times that this was crucial since I was representing the NSW Greens.

The Crikey item to which you refer was the first article under my name that I myself did not write. I was asked by Lee's office if I would be willing to submit it in my name. It was written in Lee's office and I understand Lee did have a hand in editing it. However, you really should ask this question of Lee.

I was willing to submit the item since I believed Paul Barry was wrong to claim Lee was being hypocritical in one of her media releases about political donations since the Greens had accepted the \$1.68 million contribution from Graeme Wood. Obviously Lee had nothing to do with the acceptance of the money since it was entirely an Australian Greens matter.

It was only after Jeremy Buckingham received so much criticism that I realised I had made a terrible mistake in submitting the item that was published both in Crikey and The Power Index. By the time of the last SDC I had made an investigation of the process leading up to the Upper House vote on the electoral funding bill and I believed the criticism directed toward Jeremy was unwarranted. Why was he so condemned while I escaped any censor at all after my being critical the Australian Greens? It seemed very unjust.

I apologise completely for any harm I've done to the NSW Greens and especially the Australian Greens. I believe our party is crucial for a vibrant democracy in our country and I have no desire to hurt the Greens in any way.

Norman Thompson
Inner Sydney Greens