

# Exclusive Brethren 'smuggling campaign cash' into Aus

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**A former member of the Exclusive Brethren has revealed the secretive religious sect has been transferring large sums of money across the world to fund political campaigns in Australia and the US.**

In recent years Brethren leaders have met with numerous Liberal ministers, including Prime Minister John Howard.

Now ABC TV's *Four Corners* program has revealed that tens of thousands of dollars in Brethren cash have been transferred around the world in envelopes.

Former Brethren member Don Monday says some of the money was used to fund the 2004 election campaign of US President George W Bush.

The program also suggests the Brethren are actively lobbying for the Howard Government, although sect leader Bruce Hales has barred his followers from voting themselves.

Mr Monday says he brought up to \$10,000 in cash to Australia in 2005 for distribution to the Brethren, possibly breaching Customs regulations.

"I would've known of people that said they've carried as many as 40 and 50 envelopes and some of those would've had probably as much as a thousand and to as little as \$50 in them," he said.

"The Brethren would normally, on a monthly basis, give gifts to Mr Hales as well as other people in responsible positions, and that money would be carried by what we jokingly would've called the 'Brethren Express'.

"It would all be transferred in in envelopes by people who were travelling."

But Exclusive Brethren elder and spokesman Phil McNaughton denies Mr Hales has used the money to fund political campaigns.

"He would use that to distribute to the needy amongst the Brethren and for other purposes at his discretion," he said.

Mr McNaughton says he does not know just how much money has been handed out.

"In envelopes of cash are distributions of church giving, that was set on by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians," he said.

"It is the the church plate that individual churches may wish to distribute to persons engaged in the work of the glad tidings.

"It is money given on trust. It is to be spent in furthering the work of the Lord."

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