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Extreme religious sect campaigns against Greens in Tassie

The Exclusive Brethren have reportedly begun campaigning against The Greens Party in Tasmania, distributing leaflets warning against voting for the party.

The leaflets are addressed to the "Citizens of Tasmania", and authorised by over 50 members of the Exclusive Brethren group.

Greens Leader Bob Brown has called into question the groups motives, saying that no one will listen to their "weird" policies.

"I don't think people will take much notice of what the Exclusive Brethren, with their weird policies of not allowing married women to work, of banning their children from being allowed a university education and of dividing families forever," Mr Brown said.

The Exclusive Brethren were recently implicated in accusations suggesting the group had funneled over \$300,000 in support of Liberal Party advertising.

It was alleged that the group had used a complex network of cash transportation to pay for advertising in key media publications supporting the Liberal's, and lambasting the Greens Party.

The allegation also raised questions over the ethical standing of the groups leaders and whether or not they declared the deposits to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

Registered charities and Church groups are by law not permitted to participate in political lobbying or pressure, and risk losing tax exemption if they do.

It was also revealed that both Prime Minister John Howard and Treasurer Peter Costello had met with leaders from the Church on "several" occasions, with Labor Leader Kevin Rudd labeling the group "extreme".

Both the PM and Mr Costello denied their meeting was conspiratorial, saying that anyone has a right to put their views to elected Government.

The Exclusive Brethren however does not allow its members to vote in democratic elections, nor attend school's, watch television or socialise with those outside of the Church.

Fairfax Newspapers also revealed this month that the Prime Minister had exchanged letters with the group on five separate occasions since 2003, but would not release the documents until after the election.

The group has also been involved in American politics and in campaigning for the conservative Republican party.



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