

Luna Park lease holder Brookfield Multiplex donated to Liberal fund

THE AUSTRALIAN
OCTOBER 30, 2015 12:00AM

SAVE
PRINT



Ean Higgins

Reporter <https://plus.google.com/116716661262546957732> **Follow**

@EanHiggins



The entrance to Sydney's Luna Park.

Property giant Brookfield Multiplex donated \$22,000 to the Millennium Forum, a fund that a corruption inquiry has heard was often used by NSW Liberal Party figures to get around state laws banning developers from making political donations before election campaigns.

Multiplex made the payment in 2013 as it continued to hope the state Liberal government would follow through on a lucrative backroom deal negotiated in the dying days of the ALP government to extend Multiplex's lease on Sydney's iconic Luna Park amusement district by up to 40 years. The 2011 in-principle agreement reached on the watch of Labor lands minister Tony Kelly, who was found by the Independent Commission Against Corruption to have acted corruptly on another late-in-the-day property transaction, did not receive ministerial sign-off.

Property Minister Dominic Perrottet is reviewing the agreement but will not guarantee a new Luna Park lease will be put to public tender.

Australian Electoral Commission documents show Multiplex originally declared the \$22,000 donation as going to the federal Liberal Party, but later filed an amendment saying it was in

fact made to the NSW Liberal Party and enclosed a receipt from the Millennium Forum. It has also emerged Multiplex's Luna Park subsidiary separately made big donations to the NSW Liberals — and not the ALP — soon after the change of government in 2011, with \$40,000 going to the Liberals in 2011-12.

Ian Mutton, a corporate lawyer and spokesman for a residents' group, said: "We have Multiplex showering the Liberal Party with cash at the very time the Liberal government is being asked to -extend the lease, and that leaves me wondering what the motivation was for Luna Park to make a donation."

Over the years Multiplex has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the NSW Liberal and Labor parties, money former NSW Greens MP Sylvia Hale claimed in parliament was used to "grease the wheels".

In 2009, the Labor government introduced laws banning developers donating to political parties for NSW election campaigns, although those going to federal campaigns remained lawful. Last year ICAC's Operation Spicer heard the Millennium Forum sent property developers' donations to a federal Liberal fund, the Free Enterprise Foundation, with a note that the donors hoped the funds would be donated back to the state party. FEF lawyers insisted this process was legal, but counsel assisting the commission, Geoffrey Watson SC, alleged it was a ruse. The NSW Liberal Party closed the Millennium Forum after the ICAC hearings.

Multiplex spokeswoman Kerrie Muskens said the motivation for making the Millennium Forum the beneficiary of the \$22,000 donation was not to dodge the prohibited donations law, and said the amendment to the AEC disclosure had been at the AEC's instigation. A NSW Liberal Party spokeswoman said all the donations in question from Multiplex were "received, banked and applied for federal election purposes". However, she would not say whether the \$22,000 donation was rechannelled to the FEF and then back to the state party.

[Share on Facebook](#) [Share on Twitter](#) [Share on Google+](#) [Share on email](#)