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HD **Developer's \$150,000 party donation**
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The largest individual donor to the Queensland Liberal National Party in the past year, former **coal** baron turned marina operator Paul Darrouzet, gave \$150,000 to the party a week before gaining approval to dredge near the Great Barrier Reef.

As the Independent Commission Against Corruption in NSW casts a spotlight on the murky world of political donations, an investigation by The Australian Financial Review can reveal **property** and construction companies continue to help fill the LNP coffers.

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Unlike NSW, Queensland does not have a ban on **property** donations and the Newman government recently lifted the threshold for donation disclosure from \$1000 to \$12,400 – in line with federal rules.

The LNP has raised twice as much money as the Labor Party since the 2012 election, \$42.7 **million** compared with \$20.5 **million**, as big business, including **property** developers, continue to back the Newman government ahead of next year's state election.

Mr Darrouzet, who denied there was any link between the donation and dredging approvals, is one of the new breed of political donors who have so far avoided the public spotlight.

He made his fortune when he and some associates **sold** a majority **stake** in the Foxleigh **coal** mine to global giant Anglo American for more than \$700 **million** at the height of the **coal** boom in 2007.

He bought the Abell Point marina at Airlie Beach in North Queensland for \$27 **million** in April last year, with plans for a \$12 **million** expansion to the 500-berth marina. But the expansion of the marina, which is within and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, required approval from both the state and commonwealth governments.

Mr Darrouzet's \$150,000 donation was made in two instalments last year via his private investment **company**, Pondcote – \$100,000 on August 21 and then \$50,000 on August 23.

A week later the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection approved an amendment to the environmental authority to allow further maintenance dredging at Abell Point marina.

Federal approval for the dredging, which will result in between 100,000 and 200,000 cubic metres being removed from the marina to a nearby disposal pond, was granted in September just before the Coalition's federal election victory.

Although Mr Darrouzet's \$100,000 donation was reported to the Electoral Commission Queensland by the LNP, as required under the special reporting event laws, the businessman has still not individually declared the \$100,000 or \$50,000 donations.

Mr Darrouzet has long been a donor to the LNP, giving money to both the state and federal campaigns, including to federal Health Minister Peter Dutton's campaign in the Brisbane seat of

Dickson. He had made another sizeable donation of \$100,000 in September 2009 and \$20,000 in December 2010.

Mr Darrouzet said he was a big supporter of the conservative side of politics and had been donating to the party since 1980. He said there was no link between the donations in August last year and the approvals for the dredging.

The dredging was completed late last week, he said, adding the marina was about 1 kilometre from the Great Barrier Reef Marine **Park**.

"We are not putting one litre [of dredge waste] into the ocean. It all comes out into contained landfill, which will then be covered and used to create a five-acre community **park**," he told the Financial Review.

"It increases access to the marina and makes a more pleasant environment for people to stay."

A spokeswoman for the Queensland Department of Environment said the approval for maintenance dredging at Abell Point was standard practice for marinas. "In the case of Abell Point, this meant allowing the **company** to manage the way they carry out their dredging **operations** while ensuring they met strict environmental standards," she said.

"All dredge spoils from the project is disposed on land sites only. Minor amendments to the environmental authority also allowed the **company** to update the sites it uses to dispose of dredge spoil to remove a **site** that had been decommissioned."

Any breach of the environmental conditions would result in significant financial penalties, the spokeswoman said.

A spokeswoman for Environment Minister Andrew Powell said dredging at Abell Point was first approved under the Labor government in 2003 and maintenance dredging had been standard practice for many years.

"Amendments to this environmental approval were made by departmental officers and were subject to time frames set out under the Environmental Protection Act. The Minister had no involvement in the approval process," the spokeswoman said.

Other big donors to the LNP in the past year, which peaked before the federal election, include Taiwanese-born lawyer David Lin (\$134,064) who is the principal at Davellin lawyers in the Brisbane suburb of Sunnybank.

Mr Lin, who is the former president of the Australian Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce Queensland unsuccessfully ran as the LNP candidate in the seat of Rankin at last September's election. He made the payments to the LNP in two instalments: \$80,000 and \$54,000 in August last year. This avoided the \$100,000 threshold for special reporting events, required by the state electoral commission.

The country's biggest privately owned waste management **company**, JJ Richards & Sons, donated \$101,500 to the party over the past two years. It would have benefited from the Newman government scrapping the former Bligh government's waste levy. The family is worth some \$390 **million**, according to the BRW Rich list.

Billionaire apartment guru Harry Triguboff donated \$50,000.

David Devine's Metro **Property Group** donated \$25,000 to the LNP.

The Financial Review reported last week that Mr Devine will book a \$24 **million** profit in just over six months, after selling a **site** that it bought from the Newman government for \$22 **million**, to a **Chinese group**.

The Zupp **Property Group**, formed out of the Zupp car sales **company** headed by John Zupp, has donated almost \$108,000 to the LNP since 2012.

Big **mining** companies – including Gina Rinehart's Hancock **Coal** and **coal** haulers Aurizon and Asciano – and gaming **company** Echo Entertainment all made contributions to the LNP over the past few years.

Other big donors to the LNP in its first term in office include, ironically, **mining** magnate Clive Palmer, who donated a total of \$180,000 before he quit the LNP in November 2012.

Even more bizarrely he donated a further \$43,000 in early 2013 – for an LNP fund-raising dinner – before he eventually formed his own political party, the Palmer United Party in mid-2013.

ALP state secretary Anthony Chisholm admitted the LNP had a distinct fund-raising advantage over the ALP, which has traditionally been able to draw upon its investment vehicles, Labor Holdings and Labor Resources.

"No doubt the LNP will heavily outspend us at the next election with their slick fundraising machine," he said.

LNP state director Brad Henderson said the party has had to campaign in state, federal, local and two by-elections over the past two years.

"The unions still have plenty of money collectively and they are actively integrated into Labor's campaigns," Mr Henderson said.

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