

MEDIA ALERT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Unions begin legal challenge to jail terms for political campaigns

Unions will today seek leave to appeal to the High Court, challenging laws that could see them jailed for political campaigns

Trade unionists will gather outside the courts at Queen Square (corner of St James Road and Macquarie Street) wearing red gags, to symbolise the NSW government's censorship of political campaigning.

The protest gathering will happen at 10am, following a court hearing on level 23 at 09:30.

Under laws passed by the NSW parliament in May, the following activities could be considered illegal:

- Third party campaigners sharing the costs of airing television advertising related to the election.
- Third party campaigners working together on a campaign and publishing their logos on joint campaign material.
- The sharing of research and polling data between third party campaigners

If campaigners 'act in concert' and are unaware of the law they could face two years in jail. If they do so deliberately, they could face up to ten years in jail.

Police are also empowered to enter and search offices and conduct interviews.

The laws also impose a \$500,000 cap on electoral expenditure by third party campaigners in the lead up to an election - down from the current limit of \$1.28 million.

The Unions NSW High Court action will argue the new laws are a breach of the constitutional right to political communication. The application is jointly supported by the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association, Electrical Trades Union, NSW Teachers Federation, United Services Union and Health Services Union.

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