

Casino gave AUD 100,000 to Labor

Star City made a one-off AUD 100,000 donation to the NSW Labor Party in the lead-up to the 2007 election – only months before it was due to begin negotiations with the State Government over its monopoly casino licence.

The Daily Telegraph uncovered the payment in the party's latest 2007 election funding declarations submitted to the NSW Electoral Commission.

The payment, one of the largest single donations given to the party, was made on November 3, 2006, by cheque.

It was four months before the state election and six months before the company began its lobbying of Treasurer Michael Costa to retain its exclusivity agreement as sole casino licence operator in NSW.

The political donation declarations cover the last electoral cycle from 2003 to April 30, 2007.

Star City has been a donor to the ALP since it first began operations in 1995.

However, the AUD 100,000 entry was the largest single donation the casino has made and more than three times the AUD 30,000 it donated in November 2003.

On October 30, 2007, the Government said it had made a deal with Star City for the casino operator to secure another 12-year licence to operate the only casino in NSW, after months of negotiations.

A Star City spokesman confirmed the payment, admitting it was large but saying it was decided to consolidate a number of smaller donations into one.

Denying it was trying to curry favour before its negotiations, the spokesman said the company paid AUD 100 million to retain its exclusivity deal.

He said the casino paid AUD 100,000 to join Labor's Business Dialogue, set up by party head office as an election fundraising scheme.

„Rather than being a donor, we joined the Business Dialogue, which gave us access to a range of events,“ he said.

The dialogue gives members exclusive access to government ,ministers, including the Treasurer and Premier.

The AUD 100,000 was clearly treated as a donation by the party, which included it as a „political donation“ in its 2007 election declarations.