

**Private submission to the Integrity Commission Tasmania framework document:
MODEL FOR REFORM OF LOBBYING OVERSIGHT IN TASMANIA**

I have no proof of underhand dealings in Government, although I could cite several examples where outcomes of processes like grant programs, development permits, licence conditions and onerous contracts signed by Government readily suggest this.

Buying influence can easily be construed following positive outcomes for the gaming sector, salmon farming, forestry, renewable energy generators and more recently, corporate sporting codes – all at the expense of broader public gain.

It is this suspicion which underlies the need for an integrity commission and a public dashboard where electors can see who our ministers and senior bureaucrats are meeting on a regular basis, and the subject being discussed.

If there was not a wide communal distrust of elected governments we would not be calling for transparency.

The duplicitous nature of donations to candidates, elected members and political parties is where the trouble starts. Therefore, real-time disclosure of any gift over \$1000 needs to be implemented.

Expensive seats at political party events which guarantee access to policy-makers should also elicit complete disclosure of attendees.

Lobbyists need to declare their retainers from clients, and their affiliations to politicians or parties.

Senior public servants, who have resigned, should declare their severance pay and conditions. They should then declare the names of any “consultancies” which they establish, and the date which this occurred. This applies as well to “in-house lobbyists”.

Parliamentarians and public servants should not be permitted to engage in any commercial activity which involves government contracts for a period of two (2) years after quitting the public payroll.

Continued use of the term “The Honourable” should be policed after individuals cease to be elected members of parliament, and the rules for those applying for lifetime use should be tightened. It should not be used as a grandiose promotional statement by business which engage former politicians.

If mainland states have seen the need to introduce tougher laws to illuminate the extent of access and influence which lobbyists have, there can be no doubt it’s overdue in Tasmania. Without re-inventing the wheel, we should simply implement the strongest rules-set available.

Democracy as a social construct means “of the people”. Although we go to the ballot box in Tasmania to install representatives, the flimsy notion of “a level playing field” is easily violated when paid representatives of commercial interests have easier and more frequent access to decision-makers than do either individual citizens or those speaking for community groups. Plutocracy is easily disguised as philanthropy, with the “jobs, jobs, jobs” mantra promising shared economic benefits for the entire community.

This is even more pronounced in Tasmania, where Government Business Enterprises form a large portion of the corporate sector. While notionally independent boards run these businesses, the public, as shareholders, are represented by a couple of Ministers, usually including the Premier or Treasurer.

It is not unusual to read in an annual general report: “The Board was directed by the Minister to enter an agreement with”, etc, illustrating that directors appointed to run the enterprise in the best interests of its public shareholders can be over-ruled by a minister acting for the benefit of a private company.

We have no annual general meeting for these GBEs, where these officials answer to shareholders. Parliamentary committees, an integral part of the democratic investigation of Government, are increasingly being denied information under the guise “cabinet confidentiality”.

“Questions on notice” deflect unwanted interrogation, and responses are often delayed, and generally delivered out of the public arena.

The engagement of public relations firms to “sell” Government policy is despicable, as is the orchestrated media campaign for announcements. That former editors of our daily newspapers gravitate to positions as senior media advisors to Premiers further erodes public trust.

The integrity of governance is paramount, and with more decisions regularly failing the pub test, it’s a sure sign that Tasmanian electors need unequivocal proof that their democracy is actually working in their best interests.

I support the Integrity Commission to make lobbying glaringly transparent in Tasmania, and for our new regime to be the best in the Commonwealth.



This famous cartoon by Joseph Keppler said it all in 1889, while “the big end of town” pursues its aims in exactly the same way 134 years on.

Greg Pullen