

I am grateful for the opportunity to make a submission on the Integrity Commission report on lobbying framework.

I have long been concerned about the lack of integrity in Tasmanian politics and public office. The excessive influence of powerful vested interests such as the gambling lobby, salmon industry, developers and corporate tourism have been clear for all to see. To date, the Integrity Commission in Tasmania is seen as a “toothless tiger”. I hope the proposed changes can be strengthened to give the Tasmanian people the democracy we expect.

The Tasmanian Integrity Commission's Lobbying Framework Report presents a combination of encouraging proposals and concerning gaps. In order to establish a robust regulatory system that aligns with best practices, further improvements should be made. This submission aims to provide recommendations for enhancing the existing framework in key areas of concern.

1. Legislative Accountability:

Recommendation: Transition from voluntary compliance to legislated requirements.

The voluntary nature of compliance proposed in the Framework Report falls short of ensuring effective accountability. To establish a strong lobbying system, it is imperative that the code of conduct and associated requirements be legislated. This approach would enable the imposition of serious sanctions, including multi-year bans and fines for non-compliance. Drawing inspiration from Canada, Ireland, and Scotland, Tasmania should leverage legislation to fortify its lobbying framework.

2. Extending Reform to Local Councils:

Recommendation: Broaden lobbying reform to include local councils.

Given Tasmania's reputation for public integrity concerns, expanding lobbying reform to encompass local councils would be invaluable. By integrating reforms at this level of governance, Tasmania can regain lost ground, fostering integrity across all spheres of influence. It is essential to recognize the potential impact of lobbying activities on local decision-making processes.

3. Addressing the Concerns of Paid Access:

Recommendation: Include paid access in lobbying reforms for comprehensive transparency.

Exclusion of paid access from lobbying reforms raises grave concerns and fails to meet public expectations. It is paramount that lobbying reforms represent transparency and fairness, which necessitates the inclusion of paid access arrangements. Engaging with local Members of Parliament on this matter and advocating for the acknowledgment of paid access in lobbying reforms is essential in order to ensure a comprehensive approach.

4. Strengthening Donation Reporting:

Recommendation: Set a reasonable threshold (around \$1000) for donation declaration and require reporting of recipients.

Section 2.2 of the Framework Report states that lobbyists must declare donations made in the previous 12 months, but without a determined threshold set by the Commission. To enhance transparency, a reasonable threshold of around \$1000 should be established, and lobbyists must be obliged to report the recipients of their donations. This measure would provide greater insight into the beneficiaries of lobbying efforts and promote accountability.

5. Enforcing the Ban on Gift Giving:

Recommendation: Expand guidance to address gifts from unregistered lobbyists and third parties.

The Framework Report's recommendation to check the registered lobbyist list before accepting gifts does not sufficiently address potential loopholes. To ensure effective enforcement, the Commission should provide detailed guidelines on identifying and reporting gifts from unregistered lobbyists or third parties who act on their behalf. This will bolster the integrity of gift policies and avoid undue influence.

6. Addressing Dual Hatting:

Recommendation: Adopt a robust approach, banning significant election campaign participants from lobbying for the entire term of office.

The proposed 12-month cooling-off period for individuals engaged in dual roles falls short of addressing the serious risks of corruption and undue influence. Following the best practice outlined in the Coaldrake Report, lobbyists who play a significant role in an election campaign should be prohibited from lobbying for the entire term of office. Tasmania should strive for a comprehensive approach that prioritizes maintaining public trust.

7. Extending the Cooling-off Period:

Recommendation: Increase the proposed 12-month cooling-off period, aligning with jurisdictions such as Queensland and South Australia.

In order to bolster integrity and align with comparable jurisdictions, Tasmania should consider extending the proposed 12-month cooling-off period. An alignment with Queensland and South Australia's two-year cooling-off period would ensure a more robust framework. The Commission should provide evidence supporting the need for a shorter period, as it currently lacks justification for departing from the longer cooling-off periods in place elsewhere.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

regards

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