

PARLIAMENT THIS WEEK Significant projects bill prioritised, donations reform delayed

Dragging feet on donations law: Labor

Benjamin Seeder

THE government's Project of State Significance Amendment Bill will be debated in the Legislative Council this week, but much-delayed political donations reform will have to wait a bit longer, according to Premier Jeremy Rockliff.

The projects bill, which will help the government progress its Macquarie Point stadium project, passed the lower house last week, but faces challenges from independents and Labor in the upper chamber.

Opposition parties and independents were dismayed that Premier Jeremy Rockliff left out mention of reform to political donations on this week's Legislative Council agenda.

The Donations Reform Bill passed through the House of Assembly last November, but it has sat dormant in the Legislative Council since then as the government prioritised other legislation.

That delay has prompted both Labor and independents to accuse the government of stalling over the bill, which would require all

political donations of more than \$5000 received by a candidate or political party be disclosed within seven days during an election campaign. Tasmania is the only state without such legislation on the books.

Mr Rockliff confirmed that legislators in the upper chamber would be briefed on the donations bill this week, and a spokesperson confirmed that it was due to be debated "some time in the Spring session" of the Legislative Council.

Independent Nelson MLC Meg Webb said the

government has been stalling on donations reform for five years.

"This is a commitment made over five years ago and two premiers back with Will Hodgman," she said.

"The bill has been sitting there for the better part of this year. It's ready to be dealt with by our chamber, and it's up to the government of the day in terms of the order that they might bring bills on for debate. I guess they've prioritised putting through other bills this year."

One of the bills taking a higher priority was the

Project of State Significance Amendment Bill, which would require the stadium project - and other projects of state significance - to return to the state parliament for final approval after other approvals processes.

"It's a very positive step forward in terms of securing huge investment in the Macquarie Point stadium and associated infrastructure precinct plan and indeed securing the 19th AFL licence," he said.

The government rushed the Bill through the House of Assembly last week, after

concern about the level of disclosure on the stadium project was cited as among the reasons for the defection of two of its members earlier this year.

Labor justice spokeswoman Ella Haddad on Sunday said the donations Bill should have been first on the government's order of business for the Legislative Council.

She said the opposition would move to amend the donation disclosure threshold to \$1000, as a \$5000 threshold was considered too high.