


Analysis: New Tasmanian ministerial diaries scheme leaves disclosure standard weaker than 16 years ago

Disclosure is now monthly but meetings between ministers and political party events are still excluded, and it lacks an enforcement mechanism



 Premier Jeremy Rockliff and an extract from his April ministerial diary. Image: Bob Burton/Tasmanian Inquirer.

Despite recently announced tweaks to the ministerial diaries disclosure scheme, the government will provide far less information to Tasmanians about who the Premier is meeting than was the case 16 years ago.

The headline changes announced by Premier Jeremy Rockliff in a June 5 [media release](#) were limited: monthly instead of quarterly disclosure and improved searchability. Beyond that, there were few details and no explanation of why the government ignored many of the improvements suggested in public submissions.

The ministerial diaries for April, [published](#) later that day, revealed how minor the changes were. The new format added a column listing attendees and expanded the examples of who should be listed to include “stakeholders” and “government agencies”.

It is a far cry from the comprehensive details [disclosed](#) [Pdf sample] by former premier David Bartlett, initially in response to the author’s 2009 Freedom of Information request. Bartlett’s diary listed meetings with departmental officials, advisers, other MPs, party events, and lobbyists, along with details of who attended the meetings, the location, their purpose and duration.

There were two significant limitations. The disclosure didn't extend to all ministers. And it wasn't legislated. After Will Hodgman's Liberal government swept into power at the March 2014 state election, it quietly axed the diaries disclosure scheme.

Fast forward to March 2023, when the Legislative Council backed a **motion** moved by the independent member for Nelson, Meg Webb, calling for the mandatory disclosure of ministerial diaries and public consultation on the details of the exact scheme. Instead of ensuring a public consultation process, Rockliff **pressed ahead**, deciding to release ministers' diaries each quarter, but including loopholes that meant hundreds of meetings were excluded from public view. Gone were the days of the premier disclosing the names of attendees, meetings between ministers and advisers, or party events.

Many meetings concealed

The shortcomings of the new regime were illustrated by a single Right to Information (RTI) request by an unidentified MP that **revealed** meetings with Rockliff that weren't included in the diary disclosure. It suggested hundreds of meetings a year were being concealed from public view. Even when meetings **were listed**, the purpose was frequently hidden behind disingenuous descriptions such as "various issues" and "various matters" – vague terms that disguised rather than explained the purpose of the meetings.

Frustrated by the government's approach, Webb won fresh Legislative Council support in September 2024 for a motion calling for public consultation on the scheme, and for the government to report on progress by late November that year. The government **ignored** the motion. Just over a year later, the Legislative Council backed another Webb motion calling for public consultation on changes to the scheme.

Rockliff relented, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) **released** a consultation paper in November 2025 on potential changes. While the paper reviewed schemes operating in Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT, it notably omitted any acknowledgement of the disclosure that occurred between 2010 and 2014 during the term of the Labor-Green government.

While Rockliff proclaimed the latest changes to the diaries disclosure scheme are part of the government's "ongoing transparency agenda", the reality is Tasmanians are being offered far fewer details than they are legally entitled to under the Right to Information Act.

Of the 12 public submissions to the review, three came from sitting independent MPs – Meg Webb, Craig Garland and Kristie Johnston. Neither the Labor Party nor the Greens made submissions. The submissions had common themes, with most supporting the disclosure of all meetings, including party fundraising events and meetings with other ministers, advisors and departmental officials. There was also support for a more detailed description of the meetings' purpose and the time and duration of appointments.

Instead of the premier announcing the changes at a media conference and facing questions, the government provided *The Mercury* with a media release for an exclusive news story. “Ministers to open diaries: Premier overhauls transparency rules with monthly disclosures,” the headline proclaimed. The story reproduced most of the media release, did not mention the remaining loopholes and included no dissenting voices. In the media release issued an hour after *The Mercury's* report went online, Rockliff said there would be “clear minimum standards and defined exclusions”, but provided no details and failed to address many of the issues raised in public submissions.

The more things change, the more they stay the same

The ministerial diaries disclosures for April, published a few hours after the media release, indicated that Rockliff's revised scheme would still not meet RTI disclosure standards. Meetings of cabinet, with staff, other ministers, or Liberal MPs would not be disclosed. This contrasts with documents released in March 2025 in response to an RTI request for details of a specific day in Rockliff's diary. *Tasmanian Inquirer* asked Rockliff whether the new diaries disclosure scheme would meet RTI standards. He did not respond.

Meeting descriptions remained just as vague as the previous pervasive reliance on “various issues”. For example, an April 14 meeting between Rockliff and Alan Morrell, the chief executive of West Coast Renewables, was described as being held to discuss “energy matters”. Was the meeting about the environmental assessment of the company's proposed Whaleback Ridge wind farm on public land in the Meredith Ranges Regional Reserve? Or something else?

Other problems have been newly introduced. DPAC's public consultation paper flagged the possibility of extending diary disclosure changes to include opposition and shadow ministers, but public support for the change was mixed. Some who responded backed the change, while others offered qualified support. The Tasmanian Council of Social Service proposed establishing a strong legislated disclosure standard for ministers first and, in a 12-month review of its operation, considering extending the scheme to all MPs.

Instead, Rockliff announced an “opt-in system for all MPs to begin voluntarily disclosing” their diaries. He provided no details and did not commit additional administrative support for the work to be done.

It is an approach that benefits the government as it aims to shift media focus away from inadequate ministerial disclosure standards toward non-government members. Without additional administrative resources, especially for independent MPs, it effectively reduces their capacity to raise issues. Independent Braddon MP Craig Garland says that while he is happy to disclose who he meets with, ministers govern the state and each has their own full-time diary manager.

When the government published the appointments diaries for April, not a single backbench Liberal MP's diary was included. Asked by *Tasmanian Inquirer* at a June 11 media conference whether he expected Liberal backbench MPs to publish their diaries, Rockliff conceded they should.

DPAC also identified the lack of enforcement as one of five “limitations” of existing state-based diaries disclosure schemes and noted that “there are few consequences for non-compliance”. Despite most public submissions endorsing the need for enforcement procedures, Rockliff's announcement did not address the issue. Webb said there was a need to ensure disclosure standards were legislated to prevent premiers changing the scheme, and to provide capacity for compliance auditing, reporting and enforcement.

While Rockliff proclaimed the latest changes to the diaries disclosure scheme are part of the government's “ongoing transparency agenda”, the reality is Tasmanians are being offered far fewer details than they are legally entitled to under the Right to Information Act. Instead of adopting a nation-leading transparency standard, Rockliff has opted to provide less information on his meetings than the premier did 16 years ago.
