

Sunlight the antidote to backroom dealing

My proposed legislation will make the dark art of political lobbying far more transparent and democratic, writes **Meg Webb**

In a vibrant democracy the “contest of ideas” allows individuals, community, business and civil society to lobby government and elected representatives on matters of policy, legislation and funding.

However, not all stakeholder voices are treated equally when it comes to access and influence.

Tasmanians are far too familiar with the influence of vested interests on government decision-making in this state.

Money and connections buy influence and access, and backroom deals position vested interest over public interest. This directly contributes to a loss of community confidence in our political system and erodes the strength of our democracy.

As an antidote, we must construct integrity architecture to buttress transparent, accountable, fair and good-quality government decision-making.

In recent years, Tasmania has moved from the back of the pack to nation-leading on transparency of political donations and now it is well past time to do the same on oversight of political lobbying.

Tasmania’s current bare-minimum oversight of political lobbying is outdated and ineffective, comparing very poorly to other Australian states and territories.

To address this, the Integrity Commission developed a new recommended model of contemporary, good-practice lobbying oversight which it says needs to be legislated for effective implementation.

Despite what may be claimed publicly, most governments of the day are reluctant to increase transparency and accountability around their decision-making and exercise of power.

Fortunately, Tasmania’s current



Meg Webb will introduce a private member’s Bill to strengthen lobbying oversight. Picture: David Killick

minority government, in a parliament with independents and minor parties committed to strengthening integrity, provides a ripe opportunity to legislate nation-leading lobbying oversight and shore up another key element of our integrity architecture.

As a builder, not a blocker, I grabbed this opportunity with both hands and have developed a private member’s Bill to legislate the Integrity Commission’s recommended lobbying oversight model.

On political lobbying, this Bill can shift Tasmania from being the national laggard to become a beacon of gold-standard lobbying integrity.

The purpose of my Political Lobbying (Integrity and Transparency) Bill 2026 is to provide a formal and enforceable framework to guide ethical conduct of public officials and lobbyists.

The Bill achieves this by specifying the lobbying activities to be regulated and between whom.

It establishes the mechanism for public disclosure of lobbying activity and ensures paid advocacy occurring

behind closed doors by political lobbyists is disclosed and brought into public view in a timely manner.

The Bill recognises and supports with clear processes the positive role transparency plays in the oversight of lobbying activities to enhance fairness and improve the quality of government decision-making and public policymaking.

Tasmanians would be able to see who is contacting the government and policy makers, when and on what matter.

Importantly, legislating robust oversight raises expectations that when government decisions and policy are made, those responsible will filter the range of input received and make decisions in the best interests of the community overall.

The 2022 Coaldrake Review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector noted, “In a world where influence is a commodity, the ability to influence is itself tradeable with the capacity to skew outcomes to benefit those who can hire the best-connected lobbyists rather than produce the best result for the public benefit.”

The transparent regulation of political lobbying will safeguard our democracy by reducing the capacity for policy capture and strengthening public confidence in our systems of governance.

Tasmanians deserve and can have an effective and fit-for-purpose political lobbying regulatory framework as an essential and robust part of our integrity architecture. Let’s get building!

Meg Webb is the independent member for Nelson

Meg Webb’s exposure draft of her Political Lobbying (Integrity and Transparency) Bill 2026 is open for public consultation from today at megwebb.com.au.