

Enhancing Accountability and Transparency: A Review of Ministerial Diary Disclosure Practices

Discussion paper

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Ministerial Diary Disclosure Framework

Introduction

Transparency and accountability are cornerstones of good governance. Public confidence in government is strengthened when decision-making is open to scrutiny and when citizens can clearly see how elected officials engage with stakeholders.

Right to information and routine disclosure mechanisms play a vital role in promoting integrity, reducing the risk of undue influence, and fostering trust in democratic institutions.

Ministerial diaries—records of scheduled meetings, events, and media engagements—offer a valuable window into the workings of government. Since April 2023, diaries for Tasmanian Ministers have been released routinely on a quarterly basis.

This information is publicly available on the [Department of Premier and Cabinet Ministerial and Parliamentary Support Routine Disclosure website](#). This includes details of ministerial portfolios, visits, events attended, and media commitments.

Currently, personal or electorate meetings, internal government meetings with Ministers, staff, or government officials are not included.

The Tasmanian Government remains committed to enhancing transparency and accountability. As part of this commitment, it is timely to review whether current practices around ministerial diary disclosure continue to meet public expectations and remain fit for purpose.

This Discussion Paper considers and proposes changes to Tasmania's routine disclosures of ministerial diaries. and we seek your feedback on the proposed changes.

This paper sets out:

1. Current frameworks across states & territories for ministerial diary disclosure (including opposition where applicable)
2. The Australian Government's position
3. Key differences, gaps, strengths/weaknesses
4. Proposed changes
5. How to make a submission

1. State and Territory Comparison

Across Australia, jurisdictions have adopted varying approaches to diary transparency, with Tasmania among those leading the way, while the Commonwealth maintains a more limited regime.

Below is a summary of how various states and territories handle ministerial (and sometimes opposition) diary disclosure.

Jurisdiction	Frequency / Timing	What is disclosed?	What is excluded/ redacted	Opposition Diaries/Shadow Ministers
Queensland	Monthly proactive disclosure of portfolio-related meetings and events by ministers and assistant ministers.	Includes meetings with external parties, including registered lobbyists, with details of all attendees & subject matter.	Excludes personal, electorate or party political meetings/events, media events and interviews; matters contrary to public interest (security, law enforcement).	Queensland Opposition Handbook requires extracts from the diary of the Leader of the Opposition to be published monthly.
Victoria	Quarterly disclosure of ministers' diary summaries.	Date; attendees (with job titles where relevant); organisation names; purpose of meeting; for registered lobbyists, also client and matter, link to lobbyists register.	Does not include internal departmental meetings (with ministerial/VPS staff), social functions, media meetings/interviews, Cabinet or Cabinet Committee meetings.	Some disclosure requirements for opposition, though less clearly defined.
New South Wales	Quarterly disclosure of scheduled meetings with external organisations and portfolio-related activities by ministers.	Includes external stakeholders, third-party lobbyists, etc. Scheduled meetings to include face-to-face, video, and telephone.	Excludes personal, party political, media interviews, and social functions.	Opposition diary disclosure is less consistent; it is not always required.
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	Regular disclosure (quarterly or periodic) per the Open Access Information scheme.	External meetings, functions, and events related to ministerial responsibility.	Similar exclusions include personal, party political, and other standard redactions.	—

Jurisdiction	Frequency / Timing	What is disclosed?	What is excluded/ redacted	Opposition Diaries/Shadow Ministers
Tasmania	Ministerial diaries are quarterly.	Date, organisation names, and purpose of meeting or visit.	Does not include internal departmental meetings (with ministerial/TSS staff), personal functions, Cabinet or Cabinet Committee meetings.	No mandated requirement for opposition or shadow ministers.
South Australia	No proactive, mandated ministerial diary disclosure.	—	—	—
Western Australia	No proactive ministerial diary disclosure.	—	—	—
Australian Government (see further below)	No proactive, mandated ministerial diary disclosure.	—	Exemptions under FOI include Cabinet documents, personal affairs, and national security.	No formal requirement.

2. Australian Government

There is no requirement under current Commonwealth legislation or policy that ministers regularly publish their diaries, summaries, or meeting schedules with stakeholders (including lobbyists) in the way states do.

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* applies to ministers and most agencies. This allows members of the public to request documents held by ministers or agencies. However, ministerial diaries are not proactively published under FOI: one must request them (if they are held and not exempt).

Recent private member bills (e.g. by Senators David Pocock and Monique Ryan) have proposed monthly diary publication, reflecting growing public and parliamentary interest in strengthening transparency.

For opposition (shadow ministers) at the federal level: there is no formal requirement that their diaries be published. Some individuals (e.g. Senator Ross Cadell) have voluntarily published their shadow minister diaries, but this remains rare and inconsistent.

3. Key Differences, Strengths & Weaknesses

3.1. Differences

Ministerial diary disclosure practices vary significantly across Australian jurisdictions. The following key differences are observed:

- **Proactivity and Regularity:** Queensland mandates monthly proactive disclosure, while Victoria and New South Wales publish quarterly. Tasmania also follows a quarterly model. In contrast, the Commonwealth Government does not require proactive publication of ministerial diaries.
- **Scope of Disclosure:** State regimes generally require disclosure of meetings with external stakeholders, including registered lobbyists, with details such as attendees and meeting purpose. Commonwealth ministers may record such meetings internally, but there is no obligation to publish them proactively.
- **Coverage of Opposition Offices:** Some jurisdictions, such as Queensland, include opposition or shadow ministers in disclosure requirements. Others, including Tasmania and the Commonwealth, do not mandate opposition diary publication.
- **Exemptions and Redactions:** Common exclusions across jurisdictions include personal, party political, media-related, and Cabinet-related meetings. However, the breadth and interpretation of these exemptions vary, affecting the consistency and completeness of disclosures.
- **Enforcement and Compliance Mechanisms:** Jurisdictions differ in the strength of their compliance frameworks. Some rely on legislation or formal handbooks, while others depend on conventions or political norms. Enforcement mechanisms and consequences for non-compliance are often limited or unclear.

3.2. Strengths in State Systems

State regimes that have implemented proactive diary disclosure demonstrate several strengths:

- **Enhanced Transparency:** Public access to ministerial diaries enables scrutiny of government decision-making and stakeholder engagement.
- **Improved Oversight of Lobbying Activities:** Disclosure of meetings with lobbyists supports integrity by allowing public tracking of lobbying efforts and influence.
- **Increased Accountability:** Diary publication facilitates oversight by media, civil society, and academia, helping to identify potential conflicts of interest or undue influence.

3.3. Areas for Improvement in State Systems

Despite the benefits, several limitations persist in existing state-based disclosure frameworks:

- **Inconsistency in Detail and Clarity:** The level of detail provided—particularly regarding the purpose of meetings—can be vague or generic, reducing the utility of disclosures.
- **Timeliness and Reliability Issues:** Some jurisdictions experience delays in publication or incomplete diary entries, undermining the effectiveness of the system.
- **Partial Coverage of Ministerial Activity:** Exclusions such as internal departmental meetings and party political engagements may obscure significant aspects of ministerial decision-making.
- **Limited Opposition Disclosure:** Most jurisdictions do not require diary publication by opposition or shadow ministers, resulting in an incomplete picture of political engagement and influence.
- **Weak Enforcement and Sanctions:** Where disclosure obligations exist, enforcement mechanisms are often minimal, and there are few consequences for non-compliance.

3.4. Opposition Diary Disclosure

The inclusion of opposition and shadow ministers in diary disclosure regimes remains inconsistent across jurisdictions:

- **State Practices:** Queensland mandates limited opposition diary publication, while other states either do not require it or apply inconsistent standards.
- **Commonwealth Practices:** There is no formal requirement for opposition diary disclosure at the federal level. Voluntary publication by individual shadow ministers has occurred but remains rare.
- **Benefits of Inclusion:** Extending diary disclosure to opposition offices enhances transparency across the political spectrum. It enables comparative analysis of stakeholder engagement, reveals lobbying patterns beyond government, and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of political influence.

4. Proposed Changes

To strengthen transparency, accountability, and public trust in government decision-making, the following reforms are proposed to enhance Tasmania's ministerial diary disclosure framework:

1. Mandatory Diary Disclosure for Ministers

It is proposed that all ministers be required to proactively disclose scheduled meetings with external stakeholders, including lobbyists, on a quarterly basis. Disclosures should include the date, attendees, organisation, and purpose of each meeting. This reform will:

- Promote proactive transparency in line with the principles of the *Right to Information Act 2009*;
- Improve public access to information about ministerial engagements;
- Support consistency and standardisation of disclosures.

2. Establishment of Minimum Standards

To ensure clarity and consistency, minimum standards will be introduced to define:

- What constitutes an “external” meeting;
- What categories of information are to be excluded or redacted;
- The format and accessibility requirements for published diaries.

3. Timeliness and Reliability of Publication

Ministerial diaries should be published within one month of the end of each reporting period. To support this, the following measures are proposed:

- Adoption of searchable and accessible formats;
- Clear publication schedules to ensure consistency across reporting periods.

4. Clearly Defined Exclusions

A clearly defined list of excluded categories of diary entries should be adopted to improve clarity and consistency in what is routinely disclosed. Such categories may include e.g. personal engagements, and sensitive operational matters. This reform will:

- Provide greater clarity on what is routinely disclosed versus excluded;
- Support consistency across ministerial offices;
- Align Tasmania's framework with best practice in other jurisdictions.

5. Extension to Opposition and Shadow Ministers

Extend requirements for routine diary disclosures to opposition and shadow ministers to ensure transparency of their engagements. This proposal extends the culture of transparency to members of parliament

5. Questions for Stakeholder Consideration

The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring that reforms to ministerial diary disclosure are informed by the views of the community and key stakeholders.

Feedback received through this consultation process will play a critical role in shaping the final framework, ensuring it reflects public expectations and supports greater transparency.

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide submissions that address the proposed changes, suggest improvements, or raise considerations relevant to implementation and impact.

To help inform the development of a strengthened ministerial diary disclosure framework, stakeholders are invited to consider the following questions in their response:

1. What are your views on the overall direction of the proposed changes to ministerial diary disclosure in Tasmania?
2. How might the proposed reforms improve transparency, accountability, and public trust in government decision-making?
3. Are there any practical considerations, risks, or challenges that should be taken into account when implementing these changes?
4. What additional measures or improvements could further enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of ministerial diary disclosures?

Have your Say – Ministerial Diaries

How to make a submission

All written submissions on the routine disclosure of Ministerial diaries must be received by Monday, 8 December 2025.

Submissions can be made in writing to:

Email: ministerialdiaries@dpac.tas.gov.au

Mail: Executive Government Services, Level 7, 15 Murray Street Hobart, Tasmania 7000 Australia

Publication of submissions

Submissions received will be published on the Department of Premier and Cabinet's website in accordance with the Tasmanian Government's [Public Submission Policy](#).

Other than indicated below, submissions will be treated as public information and will be published on our website soon after the conclusion of the submission period.

No personal information other than an individual's name or the organisation making a submission will be published.

Accessibility of submissions

The Government recognises that not all individuals or groups are equally placed to access and understand information. We are therefore committed to ensuring Government information is accessible and easily understood by people with diverse communication needs

Where possible, please consider typing your submission in plain English and providing it in a format such as Microsoft Word or equivalent.

The Government cannot take responsibility for the accessibility of documents provided by third parties.

Important information to note

Your name (or the name of the organisation) will be published unless you request otherwise.

In the absence of a clear indication that a submission is intended to be treated as confidential (or parts of the submission), the Department will treat the submission as public.

If you would like your submission treated as confidential, whether in whole or in part, please indicate this in writing at the time of making your submission clearly identifying the parts of your submission you want to remain confidential and the reasons why. In this case, your submission will not be published to the extent of that request.

Copyright in submissions remains with the author(s), not with the Tasmanian Government.

The Department will not publish, in whole or in part, submissions containing defamatory or offensive material. If your submission includes information that could enable the identification of other individuals, then either all or parts of the submission will not be published.

The *Right to Information Act 2009* and confidentiality

Information provided to the Government may be provided to an applicant under the provisions of the *Right to Information Act 2009* (RTI). If you have indicated that you wish all or part of your submission to be treated as confidential, your statement detailing the reasons may be taken into account in determining whether or not to release the information in the event of an RTI application for assessed disclosure. You may also be contacted to provide any further comment.