

This submission is made in support of stronger laws and governance practices that protect the public interest from the disproportionate influence of corporate lobbying. Our democratic institutions exist to serve the people, yet the existing lobbying and transparency framework allows vested interests to shape legislation, regulation, and major public expenditures behind closed doors. This dynamic has enabled powerful organisations to out-compete the public for access to our own elected representatives, resulting in policy outcomes that often diverge from community needs, economic fairness, and democratic accountability.

To strengthen public trust and ensure that government resources, decision-making, and legislative power remain centred on the public good, comprehensive reform of lobbying practices and transparency requirements is urgently needed.

Across multiple sectors—including infrastructure, energy, resources, gaming, and sporting organisations—there has been a persistent pattern of policy decisions shaped by well-funded lobbyists representing narrow commercial interests. These actors: Secure privileged access to ministers and senior officials. Influence the drafting of legislation and policy frameworks. Promote laws or spending decisions that predominantly serve their own commercial objectives. Operate in opaque environments, without public visibility of who is influencing government, when, and to what extent.

This imbalance allows corporate lobbyists to effectively out-bid the public for government attention, despite the fact that governmental resources, public money, and legislative authority exist for the benefit of citizens—not private entities.

When laws are lobbied for and passed without transparent processes, community input, or evidence-based assessment, the result is diminished public trust and the erosion of democratic legitimacy.

Blatant corporate interference can result in: **Bad laws** that entrench corporate privilege rather than deliver broad public benefit. **Misallocation of public funds**, such as large-scale infrastructure projects justified primarily by organisational lobbying rather than independent assessment. **Distorted policy priorities**, where the needs of communities, small businesses, and social equity are displaced by the agendas of powerful stakeholders. **Reduced accountability**, as meetings, negotiations, and policy shaping occur outside public view. In such an environment, the public is placed in the extraordinary position of having to “compete” with corporations for access to their own elected representatives—an unfair and undemocratic practice.

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Recommended Reforms

1. Mandatory Transparency of Ministerial Diaries

Require that all ministers, parliamentary secretaries, chiefs of staff, and senior departmental officials publish their diaries on a regular basis.

This practice is widely recognised as a foundational transparency tool. It prevents hidden influence, exposes patterns of access, and encourages responsible behaviour from public decision-makers.

2. Expansion of the Lobbyist Register

The definition of “lobbyist” should include:

- In-house corporate lobbyists
- Peak bodies, industry councils, and large not-for-profit organisations with political influence
- Consultants offering “government relations” services under other titles
- Any entity or individual engaged in efforts to influence government decisions, regardless of employment structure

This ensures that all lobbying activity—not only third-party lobbying—is captured.

3. Real-Time Disclosure of Lobbying Activity

Introduce mandatory real-time disclosure. This allows the public to see influence as it occurs, not months or years later.

4. Public Interest Tests for Major Legislation and Spending

Before passing any law or approving major expenditure influenced by external stakeholders:

- Require a **public interest statement**.
- Require disclosure of all stakeholders who contributed to the proposal.
- Require independent assessment of economic, social, and governance impacts.

This ensures decisions reflect genuine public benefit rather than corporate agendas.

The public deserves a government that works for them, not for those with the most money, access, or lobbying resources. Reforming lobbying laws, strengthening transparency, and exposing corporate interference are essential steps toward restoring integrity in public decision-making.

By implementing transparent ministerial diaries, strengthening the lobbying regulatory framework, and ensuring independent oversight, the government can demonstrate a clear commitment to accountability, fairness, and democratic principles.

These reforms will help prevent the creation and continuation of bad laws driven by vested interests and ensure that the policymaking process is once again centred on the people it is meant to serve.