



Department of Premier and Cabinet
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Via email: ministerialdiaries@dpac.tas.gov.au

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**Re: Submission to the Tasmanian Government Consultation on
Ministerial Diary Disclosure**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Ministerial Diary Disclosure Practices in Tasmania.

Strengthening the integrity of government decision-making is critical for maintaining public trust and ensuring that policy outcomes genuinely reflect the public interest. Transparency around ministerial access is a core safeguard against undue influence.

This submission supports the introduction of a robust, mandatory and independently monitored regime for the proactive disclosure of Ministerial Diaries. Such a reform would align Tasmania with leading integrity standards across Australian jurisdictions and would reinforce the principles underpinning the *Right to Information Act 2009* (Tas) including transparency, accountability and proactive release of information.

1.1 Access is influence

The starting point for any discussion about diary disclosure is the simple reality that access shapes influence. When certain interests—often well-resourced, highly organised or commercially motivated—have significantly greater access to ministers and senior political staff, there is a tangible risk that policy outcomes become skewed in their favour. This undermines the principle that decision-making should be based on evidence, need, and the broader public interest.

Routine and transparent disclosure of ministerial meetings helps to illuminate patterns in access, ensuring that decision-making processes are visible and capable of scrutiny. It helps reveal whether influence is being disproportionately

exercised by a narrow group of interests and provides an incentive for ministers to actively seek out a wider and more diverse range of views.

1.2 Transparency strengthens public trust

Mandatory disclosure reduces the information asymmetry that currently exists between government and the public. When stakeholder meetings are routinely made public, civil society, the media and the broader community can more readily understand who is participating in—and potentially influencing—policy discussions. A mandatory disclosure requirement will create a culture where record-keeping practices improve, the quality of decision documentation increases, and the incentive to maintain appropriate professional boundaries is strengthened.

Public trust in government grows when processes are transparent, predictable and open to scrutiny. Diary disclosure is an essential element in achieving that trust.

1.3 Transparency around lobbying protects the public interest

Lobbying is a legitimate and important part of democratic engagement. However, without transparency, lobbying can create real or perceived risks of undue influence. Mandatory disclosure helps “level the playing field” by ensuring that all stakeholders can see which interests are being heard, at what frequency, and on what subjects. This supports better policy outcomes and enhances fairness and accountability.

2. Overview: What Should Be Disclosed and Who Should Disclose

To be meaningful, a disclosure regime must be comprehensive, timely and accessible and apply to all political officeholders, not just Ministers. The following elements are recommended as the minimum standard for publication.

2.1 Who is meeting with who

The Diary disclosure requirements should apply not only to Ministers, but also to the Opposition Leader, and the Leader of any political party with 3 or more members, and those members holding Shadow Ministerial portfolios (“officeholders”). While these officeholders do not exercise executive authority, they play a central role in shaping public policy, influencing parliamentary outcomes, and engaging with stakeholders on matters that may become government policy. Even more so in the context of Tasmania’s minority government where opposition and minor party leaders and shadow ministers play a determinative role in shaping budgets, policy and legislation.

2.2 Scope of meetings

Officeholders should be required to publish details of:

- all official meetings attended by the officeholder, whether in their office, Parliament, or off-site, including scheduled phone and virtual meetings;
- all events attended by a minister in an official capacity;
- Official meetings attended solely by ministerial or officeholder advisers on behalf of, or in place of, the minister or officeholder. This ensures that meetings involving ministerial staff cannot be used as a way to avoid disclosure.

“Official meetings” should include any meeting at which government policy, regulation, funding, procurement, appointments or legislative matters are discussed.

2.2 Information that should be recorded

Each diary entry should include:

- date and start time;
- meeting format (in-person, phone, virtual) and location if face-to-face;
- names of all attendees and their organisations;
- if the meeting is with a lobbyist, the name of the lobbyist’s client
- a meaningful description (5–20 words) of the purpose of the meeting;
- the relevant portfolio or subject matter category.

This level of detail is necessary to allow the public to understand the nature of the meeting and any potential implications for policy or decision-making. The need for a clear description of the purpose is reinforced by the experience NSW and Queensland and Tasmania, where the purpose of the meeting is either left blank or includes limited, often two-word descriptions.

2.3 Timeliness and accessibility

Disclosure must occur on a predictable and timely basis so the information is available at or near the time the decision is being made or action is being taken by the Minister or officeholder.

In Queensland all meetings for a given month must be published by the end of the following month.

To facilitate scrutiny, the data should be:

- published in a machine-readable format such as CSV or JSON;
- published by the end of the following month;

- fully searchable, sortable and exportable;
- posted in a single, central location for ease of access;
- archived permanently and accessible for a minimum of seven years.

3. Strengthening Compliance: Monitoring and Enforcement

Routine disclosure will only be effective if compliance is mandatory, monitored and breaches carry consequences. The following framework is recommended.

3.1 Code of Conduct obligations and parliamentary accountability

The Diary disclosure requirement should be incorporated into the Code of Conduct for Members and the Ministerial Code of Conduct. Failure to comply should constitute a breach of the Code and therefore a breach of Standing Orders. This allows the matter to be referred to the Parliamentary Privileges Committee where appropriate. In the case of a Minister, breach of the Ministerial obligation result in a censure of no-confidence motion if a Minister routinely fails to comply with the requirement.

Embedding the requirement in the Code of Conduct elevates its importance and signals that transparency is not a discretionary matter but a core obligation of office.

3.2 Independent annual audit by the Integrity Commission

An independent audit function is essential. The Integrity Commission should:

- conduct an annual audit of ministerial diary disclosures;
- assess timeliness, completeness, accuracy, and redaction rates and reasons;
- examine a sample of diaries against departmental calendars, meeting notes or correspondence;
- publish an Annual Compliance Report, in their annual report, naming non-compliant offices and providing summary statistics across all officer holders to whom the requirement applies.

Such independent oversight ensures that diary disclosure does not become a mere procedural exercise but remains a meaningful integrity safeguard.

3.3 Redactions: clarity and justification

To maintain confidence in the regime, redactions must be:

- limited to clearly defined exempt categories, consistent with the Right to Information Act;
- accompanied by a short justification stating the section or reason relied upon.

This prevents over-use of redaction and ensures that exemptions are not applied for convenience or political sensitivity.

4. Alignment With RTI Principles and Reduction of Administrative Burden

Tasmania's RTI Act is founded on the principle that information should be released proactively wherever possible. Ministerial diary disclosure is entirely consistent with that principle.

Publishing diaries routinely will yield significant administrative benefits:

- fewer RTI applications seeking information about ministerial meetings;
- reduced workload for departmental RTI officers and ministerial offices;
- faster and more consistent access for the public;
- fewer appeals, fewer delays and fewer disputes.

For the public, diary disclosure removes the need for repeated, time-consuming and costly RTI requests simply to discover who ministers met with on issues of public significance. For government, it reduces the burden of processing such requests.

Yours Sincerely,



Craig Garland MP