

Who Has Access to the Ministerial Ear?

Background Briefing Paper: *Proposed Reform Process for Mandatory Publication of Tasmanian Ministerial Diaries*

Meg Webb MLC | September 2025

Why a Mandatory Ministerial Diaries Disclosure Scheme?

Civic engagement with governments, via individuals, businesses or organisations raising with elected representatives matters important to them, is an important function of our democracy.

Lobbying is not necessarily or inherently problematic. However, lobbying *can* and *does* become problematic when there is *actual or perceived* inequity, disproportional imbalance in, and secrecy surrounding, the access and the range of voices from public and private sectors into the decision-making process.

The transparency challenge is to make visible those seeking to influence decisions made by our elected state representatives. The mandatory, regular and consistent disclosure of Ministerial diaries is an important tool within the lobbyist oversight and public transparency toolkit.

Visibility encourages scrutiny to ensure access occurs on as level a playing field as possible, and that some 'voices' are not privileged over others, or the public interest in general. Potential conflicts of interest can be identified, and the public can be reassured vested interests are not exercising undue influence over government decision making.

Former Federal Attorney General, Mark Dreyfus advocated for greater transparency around ministerial diaries. In 2014, he argued that "[Australians] have a right to know what senior government ministers are doing with their time, who they're meeting with, who they're being lobbied by".ⁱ

Tasmanian Situation: Chronology of Calls to Reform Ministerial Diaries' Disclosures

Tasmania has a fragmented and unsatisfactory history regarding timely and transparent release of ministerial diaries.

- ▶ **2008:** the Bartlett Labor government introduced a quarterly disclosure scheme, but the practice ceased in 2014.
- ▶ **2023:** the Rockliff Liberal government reintroduced a limited quarterly disclosure scheme in response to a motion by Meg Webb MLC calling for consultation on best-practice models, passed with support by the Legislative Council.

Overall, both the Bartlett and Rockliff disclosure models consisted of serious limitations and neither were mandatory.

Despite recent multiple calls to strengthen the current ministerial diaries disclosure system, these calls have been ignored by the Rockliff Liberal government.

28 March 2023	Legislative Council voted in support of motion tabled by Meg Webb MLC calling for the Tasmanian government to:	Outcome
	<p>... undertake to introduce mandated requirements for the regular and routine disclosure of all Ministerial and Cabinet Secretary official diaries, detailing scheduled meetings, and their purpose, with stakeholders and organisations, including third parties and lobbyists; and when developing this disclosure regime to also;</p> <p>(a) ensure the process is informed by best practice examples of mandatory disclosure of ministerial diary requirements established in other jurisdictions, including examples of oversight and compliance requirements; and</p> <p>(b) develop and publicly consult on a proposed Tasmanian mandatory disclosure of ministerial diaries scheme.</p>	<p><i>Instead of consulting on a best-practice mandatory disclosure scheme, the Liberal government instituted a voluntary quarterly release of basic ministerial diary details on a quarterly basis. Periodically these fail to be released in a regular or consistent manner.</i></p>
10 Sept 2024	Legislative Council voted in support of motion tabled by Meg Webb MLC calling for the Tasmanian government to:	Outcome
	<p>(a) undertake comprehensive and public consultation on a best practice mandatory disclosure of Ministerial diaries model, and that process is to provide for input into the design, disclosure details, timeliness, application, and any other related matter; and</p> <p>(b) report back to the Legislative Council by 28 November 2024 in relation to the above.</p>	<p><i>The Tasmanian government failed to undertake the consultation in line with the 2024 vote of the Legislative Council.</i></p>

19 August 2025:- Meg Webb MLC tabled a motion again reiterating the need for a best practice mandatory ministerial disclosures model to be developed, and requesting a report back from government to the Legislative Council on such a public consultation process by 5 December 2025.

19 August 2025

I (**Ms Webb**) give Notice that tomorrow I shall move —

- (1) That the Legislative Council notes the resolutions of this House on the 28 March 2023 and on 10 September 2024 requesting the Tasmanian Government undertake to introduce mandated requirements for the regular and routine disclosure of all Ministerial and Cabinet Secretary official diaries, detailing scheduled meetings, and their purpose, with stakeholders and organisations, including third parties and lobbyists; and when developing this disclosure regime to also:
 - (a) ensure the process is informed by best practice examples of mandatory disclosure of Ministerial diary requirements established in other jurisdictions, including examples of oversight and compliance requirements; and
 - (b) develop and publicly consult on a proposed Tasmanian mandatory disclosure of Ministerial diaries scheme.
- (2) That the Legislative Council further notes that:
 - (a) The Tasmanian Government failed to report progress to this House by the 28 November last year as requested by the 10 September resolution;
 - (b) public consultation on a proposed Tasmanian mandatory disclosure of Ministerial diaries scheme did not occur; and
 - (c) despite the Tasmanian Government introducing quarterly routine disclosure of Ministerial diaries commencing with the January/March 2023 quarter; the current routine disclosures of Ministerial diaries system is not mandatory under statute; does not occur in a reliable and timely manner; and the format and details disclosed remain deficient.
- (3) That the Legislative Council also notes, given the failure to implement the Integrity Commission's Lobbyist Code of Conduct reforms this year, the growing urgency for clear, timely and transparent disclosure of lobbying contact between government, advisors and lobbyists.
- (4) And that the Legislative Council calls on the Tasmanian government to:
 - (a) undertake comprehensive and public consultation as a priority on a best practice mandatory disclosure of Ministerial diaries model, and that process is to provide for input into the design, disclosure details, timeliness, application, and any other related matter; and
 - (b) report back to the Legislative Council by 5 December 2025 in relation to the above.

This 2025 motion seeks to:

- ✓ Secure a government commitment to consult publicly on a best practice mandatory ministerial diaries disclosure model.
- ✓ Provide Tasmanians with a say in how, when, and to what degree they are informed 'who is in the room' when public policy and funding priorities are discussed between ministers and stakeholders.
- ✓ Ensure an update – either a progress or final – report of the consultation process, findings, and recommendations is provided to the Legislative Council by the specified timeframe of the 5 of December 2025. The inclusion of a report back deadline is an accountability measure by which the government's actions in response to a supported motion, can be evaluated.
- ✓ Invest in improved public confidence in the state's integrity and regulatory framework, and the integrity of government decision-making processes.
- ✓ Improve protection for government representatives and those involved in legitimate advocacy and lobbying by enabling the public to have confidence undue influence has not occurred in decision-making processes.
- ✓ Establish best governance practice in the public interest

The motion does not:

- ▶ Impose any particular mandatory ministerial diary disclosure model.
- ▶ Require the consultation or development process of a revised mandatory model to be completed by the 5 December 2025 – instead the motion requires *a report back on progress* to be provided to the Legislative Council.

What Should be Considered for a Mandatory Ministerial Diaries Disclosure Scheme?

- ✓ **Reliability and regularity of release** – currently the Tasmanian disclosure system sees ministerial diaries released quarterly. The release can also be highly irregular with unexplained delays in the publication of the next tranche of diaries. For example, at the time of writing the most recent published ministerial diaries are for the period of [January to March 2025](#).
- ✓ **Meaningful details provided** – currently the Tasmanian disclosures system provides dates, organisation names, and apparently the purpose of that meeting or visit. However, the content provided in the purpose column is usually meaningless and makes a mockery of the intent of ministerial work diary disclosures.

A recent Tasmanian Inquirer report detailed that in the 2024 quarter from July to September the Premier’s diary entries,

“... listed the purpose of a meeting as “general issues”, “various issues”, or “various matters” 38 times.”ⁱⁱ

In contrast, a April – June 2025 disclosure form released by the Victorian Treasurer provides further detail as to the meeting’s Purpose, for example the Purpose of a May meeting between the Treasurer and the Moira Shire Council and five others was for the Purpose of:

“Discussion on the Emergency Services and Volunteers Levy”ⁱⁱⁱ

A later June Meeting between the Treasurer and 10 attendees was for :

“First meeting of the Alliance of state and federal law enforcement and regulators and other relevant entities to address allegations of criminal or unlawful conduct on Victorian Government construction sites.”^{iv}

- ✓ **Searchability** – currently when they are released, ministerial diaries are in a scanned document format uploaded to the DPAC Routine Disclosure website. As scanned pdfs there is limited, if any searchability, which limits accessibility and cross- referencing capability.

What should not be included in a mandatory Ministerial Diaries Disclosure Scheme?

- ▶ There is no intention for the inclusion of personal matters, details of individual constituents who have a right to meet their elected representatives confidentially, or where meetings may reveal information which also requires confidentiality for legal, commercial-in-confidence, or public interest reasons.

Excerpt of Premier’s Diary (Bartlett) Ministerial Diary Disclosure 2008

PREMIER'S DIARY (PREVIEW WITH LIMITED FILTERS) (PUBLISHED REVIEW)	PREMIER'S OFFICE at PARLIAMENT HOUSE	Wed 28/05/2008 11:30 AM	Wed 28/05/2008 12:00 PM
Premier to meet with John Dowling (State Secretary of the Tasmanian branch of the ALP)	Premier's office at Parliament House	Wed 28/05/2008 11:30 AM	Wed 28/05/2008 12:00 PM
Premier's interview with Sue Neales (Mercury Newspaper)	Premier's office at Parliament House	Wed 28/05/2008 12:45 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 1:00 PM
Premier to meet with Secretary (DPAC)	Premier's office at Parliament House	Wed 28/05/2008 1:00 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 1:10 PM
Parliament sitting		Wed 28/05/2008 2:30 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 4:30 PM
Premier to meet with Deputy Secretary DIER for briefing on World Heritage Committee Report	Premier's office at Parliament House	Wed 28/05/2008 4:30 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 5:00 PM
Premier to meet with Secretary (DPAC)	Premier's office at Parliament House	Wed 28/05/2008 5:00 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 5:30 PM
Premier's briefing from Treasurer	Premier's office at Parliament House	Wed 28/05/2008 6:30 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 7:30 PM
Premier to meet with Treasurer		Wed 28/05/2008 7:30 PM	Wed 28/05/2008 8:00 PM
Parliament sitting		Thu 29/05/2008 7:30 PM	Thu 29/05/2008 3:00 PM
Premier to meet with Secretary (DPAC)	Premier's office at Parliament House	Thu 29/05/2008 3:00 PM	Thu 29/05/2008 3:30 PM
Meeting with Michael Polley & Levendale Community group	Party Room, Parliament House	Thu 29/05/2008 3:30 PM	Thu 29/05/2008 4:00 PM
Hold - no appointments		Fri 30/05/2008 9:30 AM	Fri 30/05/2008 11:30 AM
Premier to meet with Secretary, Deputy Secretary (DPAC) and Chief of Staff	Premier's office on Level 11 of 15 Murray Street	Fri 30/05/2008 11:30 AM	Fri 30/05/2008 12:00 PM
Premier to meet Doug Parkinson re Upper House matters	Premier's Office on level 11, Executive Building	Fri 30/05/2008 12:00 PM	Fri 30/05/2008 12:15 PM
Premier to meet with Ijeju delegation for signing of Concord	Premier's office on level 11 of 15 Murray Street	Fri 30/05/2008 12:15 PM	Fri 30/05/2008 12:45 PM
Opening the 65th National conference of the Hotel Grand Chancellor	Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart	Fri 30/05/2008 1:30 PM	Fri 30/05/2008 1:50 PM

Excerpt of Premier’s Diary (Premier) Ministerial Diary Disclosure Jan-March 2025

Date	Meeting	Purpose
11/03/2025	MEETING Builders and MBA Tasmania Roundtable - Lyden Builders, Ronald Young Builders, Cunic Homes, Pinnacle Drafting, Property Council of Australia, Derwent Shores, Master Builders Tasmania and Housing Industry Association	Re: Various issues
11/03/2025	MEETING Kristie Johnston MP	Re: Various matters
12/03/2025	MEETING Liberty House Group CEO	Re: Various issues
12/03/2025	MEETING Hobart Airport CEO and COO	Re: Various matters
13/03/2025	MEETING Tourism Industry Council Tasmania Chair	Re: Various issues
13/03/2025	MEETING Huon CEO	Re: Various matters

Support for rigorous Ministerial Diary Disclosures

“The public expects government decisions to be made in the best interests of the community, and that their state and local governments will be open to ideas and advocacy that enhance the quality of those decisions. For all views to be properly considered, access to decision-makers must be equitable and transparent. This will give the public confidence that no improper influence has affected the outcome, and will reduce the potential risk of corruption.”

Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission, *Influence and Transparency in Qld’s Public Sector*, January 2022; pg 4.

In its 2022 Summary report of submissions received to the Integrity Commission’s lobbyist reform consultation process, the Commission states:

“Public officers disclosing diaries was widely supported, other than in the whole-of-government response.

Reasons given for the benefits of disclosing diaries were the ability of the public and the Commission to ‘cross-check’. This matching exercise, though resource intensive, serves an auditing purpose that the Crime and Corruption Commission of Queensland undertakes to encourage the idea of mutual obligations between lobbyists and the lobbied.”^v

Tasmanian Integrity Commission own comment:

“Keeping and publishing Ministerial diaries was supported by submissions, and is regular practice in other jurisdictions. The Commission supports publishing Ministerial diaries as a matter of good practice for government transparency.”^{vi}

TasCOSS:

“proposals for reform should focus on measures that increase transparency in relation to government communications... Provisions should allow for the publication of details about meetings between government and lobbyists, in a format which is accessible and easy to understand. Information should be kept and published not only relating to face-to-face meetings, but also to phone calls, emails and/or messages. In relation to what details should be included”^{vii}

National non-government transparency advocates also support the regular disclosure of ministerial diaries:

The Centre for Public Integrity:

“In order to promote transparency and accountability, lobbying activity should be periodically disclosed via: - publication of the diaries of ministers, shadow ministers and their chiefs of staff; and - publication of key details of lobbyists’ meetings.”^{viii}

The Grattan Institute:

“Ministerial offices should publish details of all official meetings, both in the office and offsite, all scheduled phone calls, and all events attended by a minister in an official capacity. ‘Official meetings’ should include those at which a minister was present as well as those held with ministerial advisers only. Records of meetings should identify those present and key issues discussed. To be useful, ministerial diaries must be published in a timely manner and an accessible form. For example, all meetings for one month could be published by the end of the following month, as already happens in Queensland. The publication should be searchable and exportable, to facilitate scrutiny.”^{ix}

and

“Publishing ministerial diaries would enable journalists and others to know who ministers are meeting – and, perhaps even more importantly, who they’re not meeting – which could encourage politicians to seek more diverse input.”^x

Other National Jurisdictions which Disclose Ministerial Diaries

Additional to those international jurisdictions (e.g. UK, New Zealand, US, Canada, Spain, Scotland and Ireland) which require the regular publication of government ministerial and senior staff diaries, the following Australian jurisdictions have also implemented this accountability and transparency reform.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Government agencies are progressively making open access information available via an Open Access Information website, overseen by [the Ombudsman](#).

The Open Access policy requires a copy of the Minister’s diary that sets out all meetings, events and functions attended by the Minister that relate to the Minister’s responsibilities must be published. Personal and family events need not be included. Ministers are encouraged to ensure the most recent information published on this page is no more than six months old.

New South Wales

The [NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet website](#) details that since July 2014 NSW Ministers must publish one month after the end of each quarter extracts from their diaries detailing scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals.

Scheduled meetings include those to take place in person or by videoconference, teleconference or telephone call, and which involve the discussion of a matter that may be considered by the Minister, whether formally or informally, in his or her role as portfolio Minister or as a member of Cabinet.

Queensland

Queensland’s [Ministerial Handbook](#) states:

“Ministers are required to proactively disclose on a monthly basis portfolio related meetings and events.

For any meeting with a registered lobbyist or any person working for the lobbyist in any capacity, other than administrative staff, the diary must also include details about all attendees and a short description of the subject matter of the meeting.

Personal, electorate or party political meetings or events, media events and interviews and information contrary to public interest (e.g. meetings regarding sensitive law enforcement, public safety or whistle-blower matters) are not to be released.”

Victoria

In 2024, Victoria introduced its ministerial diaries regime. Its [Ministerial Code of Conduct](#) requires:

“Ministerial diary disclosures must detail scheduled meetings with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists, Government Affairs Directors, and external individuals. They should also disclose meeting dates, attendees, organisation/company names, and the purpose of meetings.”

MINISTERIAL DIARY DISCLOSURE SCHEMES IN AUSTRALIAN JURISDICTIONS ^{xi}

JURISDICTION	FREQUENCY	RELEVANT INSTRUMENT	LINK
Commonwealth	N/A	N/A	N/A
NSW	Quarterly	Premier’s Memorandum M2015-05- Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information	Ministers’ diary disclosures NSW Government
Victoria	Quarterly	Ministerial Code of Conduct, s 5.3	2024 ministerial diary disclosures vic.gov.au (www.vic.gov.au)
Queensland	Monthly	Ministerial Handbook, clause 3.12	Ministers and Portfolios (cabinet.qld.gov.au)
WA	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tasmania	Quarterly	Nil – voluntary	Department of Premier and Cabinet (dpac.tas.gov.au)
ACT	Quarterly		Ministerial Diaries Disclosure - Open Access Information (act.gov.au)

ⁱ Australian Financial Review, *Disclose lobbyist meetings and federal minister’s diaries: NSW ICAC*, 7 April 2024.

ⁱⁱ Tasmanian Inquirer, *No Peeking: Rockliff government spurns Legislative Council call to improve ministerial diaries disclosure*, 16 December 2024.

ⁱⁱⁱ Victorian State Government 2025 ministerial diary disclosures April-June. <https://www.vic.gov.au/2025-ministerial-diary-disclosures>

^{iv} *ibid*

^v Tasmanian Integrity Commission, *Interim Report: Overview of Submissions Received for Integrity Commission Consultation Process*, October 2022; pg 17.

^{vi} Tasmanian Integrity Commission, *Draft framework report: recommendations for reforming lobbying oversight in Tasmania* 2022; pg 15.

^{vii} TasCOSS, *Reforming Oversight of Lobbying in Tasmania*, June 2022; pg 6.

^{viii} Centre for Public Integrity, *Reforming lobbying oversight in Tasmania Submission*, July 2022; pg 5.

^{ix} Grattan Institute, *Submission on reforming lobbying oversight in Tasmania*, July 2022; pg 7.

^x ICAC SA, *The room where it happens: Lobbying and influence in South Australia*, August 2024; pg. 69.

^{xi} ICAC SA, *The room where it happens: Lobbying and influence in South Australia*, August 2024; pg. 68.