

Media Release

THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENS: LOBBYING AND INFLUENCE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA – REPORT TABLED IN PARLIAMENT

29 August 2024

Today the Commission's report *The Room Where it Happens: Lobbying and Influence in South Australia* was tabled in Parliament.

The ability for citizens, businesses and interest groups to have access to government decision makers and put their views and perspectives is an important aspect of a properly functioning democracy. When conducted openly and fairly, it can aid in good government decision making and promote the public interest.

However, the lobbying of government officials also gives rise to the risk of corruption in public administration.

The experience of anti-corruption and integrity agencies in Australia and internationally is that those seeking to influence the outcome of government decisions do not always employ legitimate means to achieve the ends they seek. They may, for example, unfairly leverage personal connections or provide financial or political incentives to motivate decision makers to prefer their private interests over other more meritorious outcomes.

Public administration in South Australia is not immune to these risks.

The Lobbyists Act 2015 and the Lobbyists Regulations 2016 together create a scheme to regulate lobbying activity in South Australia and protect against the integrity risks inherent in influencing conduct.

The Commission has examined the effectiveness of the scheme in addressing these risks. As part of this project, the Commission conducted an evaluation of the practices, policies and procedures of both the government departments responsible for the administration of the regulatory scheme, namely, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (which had responsibility for the scheme until 30 May 2024) and the Attorney-General's Department (which has assumed that responsibility).

The report identifies limitations in the scope of the scheme, and addresses the regulation of lobbied parties, post public office limitations on lobbying activity, the applicability to local government, and the administration of the regulatory scheme. Thirty-one recommendations are made directed towards addressing the deficiencies in these areas.

The report is available on the Commission's website:

<https://www.icac.sa.gov.au/evaluations-and-reviews>.

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