

Lobbying

Introduction

Lobbying and advocacy is fundamental to our democratic system of government and, when conducted ethically, can lead to better outcomes for the community. However, when lobbying is not conducted transparently and in accordance with relevant laws, lobbying can lead to corruption risks and the perception of it, including risks associated with improper influence of decision-makers, a lack of transparency in government decision-making and result in biased or partial decision-making and the misuse of public funds and resources.

The purpose of this document is to highlight risks associated with lobbying that may expose public sector employees and government and opposition representatives to corruption or reputational harm.

For key terms and definitions about lobbying, refer to the [Integrity Act 2009](#).

Regulation of lobbying

The [Integrity Act 2009](#) regulates lobbying in Queensland and the Queensland Integrity Commissioner is responsible for regulating lobbying activity and maintaining the lobbyists register.

Lobbyists who act on behalf of a third-party client must be registered with the Integrity Commissioner before they contact a Queensland government (including local government) or opposition representative for the purpose of lobbying activities.

Registered lobbyists must:

- comply with the [Queensland Registered Lobbyists Code of Conduct](#),
- document their lobbying activity with government and opposition representatives, and
- comply with directives made by the Integrity Commissioner.

Prohibitions on particular lobbying activities

The [Integrity Act 2009](#) outlines the restrictions and prohibitions on lobbying activities in Queensland:

- Registered lobbyists must not perform a substantial role in an election campaign for a political party. They cannot wear two hats ([dual hatting](#)) – of lobbyist and political campaigner – at the same time.

- Former senior government¹ or opposition representatives² must not carry out lobbying activities for a third party client if the activity relates to official dealings in which the person engaged in the person's official capacity for two years after ceasing employment. If the former representative is applying to be registered as a lobbyist, they must also give the Integrity Commissioner a statement about their 'official dealings' in the two years prior to ceasing their role.
- Government and opposition representatives must not knowingly permit unregistered lobbyists to carry out a lobbying activity with the representative or permit a former representative to carry out a lobbying activity related to their official dealings in the previous two years. If a representative becomes aware that an unregistered lobbyist is seeking to carry out, or has carried out, lobbying activity with the representative, they must decline further contact and provide, as soon as possible, the name and details to the Integrity Commissioner.
- It is an offence:
 - For an unregistered lobbyist to engage in a lobbying activity for a third party client, or portray themselves as a registered lobbyist when they are not.
 - To offer or pay a lobbyist, or for a lobbyist to receive, any fee that depends on the outcome of the lobbying activity, whether or not lobbyists are paid for their services.

Further information about lobbyists and lobbying can be found on the [Integrity Commissioner's website](#).

Corruption risks

Lobbying can have positive outcomes for business and the community when carried out ethically, transparently and in a way that ensures decisions are made fairly in the public interest. However, influence which occurs in secret or is not visible to the public (through disclosure of diaries, public registers or other reporting mechanisms), may contribute to perceptions of inequity or favouritism.

Corruption risks associated with lobbying can include:

- Actions that can be seen to be improperly influencing an official, such as offering favourable treatment, gifts or benefits to secure a current decision or future decision.
- Creating a conflict of interest, if lobbying is undertaken by a person or entity with whom the decision-maker has some personal or professional connection. This could include a political connection or prior working relationship.
- Biased decision-making, if a decision-maker is improperly influenced in relation to the decision or fails to give equal opportunity to other interested or affected parties to submit their case or arguments for or against a particular decision. Biased decision-making can include apprehended bias, that is, whether a reasonable person with an understanding of the facts would perceive that the decision lacked impartiality.

1 'Former senior government representatives' are individuals who once held, but no longer hold, any of the following offices: premier; minister; assistant minister; councillor; ministerial staff member; assistant minister staff member; an office of a public sector officer that is an office of chief executive, senior executive or senior executive equivalent.

2 'Former opposition representatives' are individuals who held, but no longer hold, any of the following offices: leader of the opposition; deputy leader of the opposition; staff member in the office of the leader of the opposition.



- Insufficient awareness among staff about their requirements if they are contacted by a lobbyist or former government or Opposition representatives, which may inadvertently result in unethical practices and/or improperly influence decision-making.

Strategies to prevent corruption

The following opportunities have been identified to mitigate corruption risks and prevent reputational harm associated with lobbying.

Identify and assess the risk of improper influence

All public sector agencies should have a governance framework which includes an internal control structure and risk management system to mitigate the risk associated with its operations and delivery of services. In line with these requirements, public authorities should consider if a risk involving lobbying needs to be identified, assessed and appropriate controls documented in their risk register. The register should include:

- the likelihood and consequences of lobbyists engaging with the agency's employees,
- the actions that the agency is undertaking to reduce those risks, and
- who is responsible for managing them.

Clear policies and procedures

All public sector agencies should have clear policies and procedures to comply with their legislative obligations, manage the risks associated with improper influence and help guide their staff if contacted by a lobbyist, whether registered or someone representing their own (or their organisation's) interests (an in-house lobbyist). Staff and government representatives should also be provided with clear guidance to help them understand their obligations when interacting with lobbyists and promote greater transparency of these interactions.

The policies and procedures should:

- Set out a process for ensuring that any contact with staff or government representatives which appears to be lobbying is not continued until a decision is made about whether the [Integrity Act 2009](#) applies to the contact.
- Set out a process for managing all contacts between staff and registered third-party lobbyists, including a convenient method for checking the currency and completeness of their registration including the following additional internal controls:
 - Check 1: The person making the contact is registered as a lobbyist with the Integrity Commissioner (check the Lobbying Register and note the result on the form).
 - Check 2: The person is a former senior government representative and can conduct lobbying activity (check when the person left their government role and whether it complies with the [Integrity Act 2009](#), and note the result on the form).
 - Check 3: The lobbyist has completed the Integrity Commissioner's Contact logs correctly (check and note the result on the form).
- Provide clear instructions for effectively managing any conflicts of interest that may arise for staff or government representatives — for example, by cross-reference to another policy or relevant legislation (e.g. a code of conduct or the [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994](#)).



- Require that staff or government representatives refuse to have any contact with a third-party lobbyist who is not registered on the Integrity Commissioner's [Queensland Lobbying Register](#). Staff and government representatives should also be required to report any attempted contacts by unregistered third-party lobbyists or former government representatives who are restricted from lobbying government on any matter with which they had dealings as an official for a period of two years after leaving government service. Staff should report improper contacts through their chief executive officer, and ministers and councillors can report directly to the Integrity Commissioner.
- Require that meetings with lobbyists occur in official locations, or using official channels e.g. work phones, videoconferencing applications and, whenever possible, with more than one official representative in attendance. Ministers and councillors should avoid one-on-one meetings.

Forms and registers

Capturing key information about contacts between government representatives and lobbyists can help ensure an agency's decision-making and recordkeeping is open and transparent. Forms to record contact with lobbyists and central registers can assist with reporting on lobbying activities to senior management and/or the Integrity Commissioner and informal monitoring of corruption risks and compliance with relevant procedures.

Agencies and government representatives should:

- Require the staff member or representatives responsible for the lobbyist contact (e.g. coordinating or hosting the contact) to complete a 'contact with lobbyist' form soon after the contact occurred and provide sufficient detail about the meeting.
- Establish and maintain a central register of contacts with lobbyists to ensure that information about meetings with lobbyists is easy to identify and report on. Although there is no legislative requirement to maintain a central register of contacts with lobbyists, records of meetings are still required to be kept in accordance with the [Public Records Act 2023](#). The register should include a template and process for ensuring that all contacts with lobbyists are properly recorded in the register, and are available for appropriate scrutiny.
- Where a staff member, government representative or a person lobbied makes a decision related to the lobbying activity, the agency/person should also document the key components of the decision-making process including the names of all officials involved, contact with any lobbyists, how the decision was made and by whom, and the reasons for making a particular decision.

Managing conflicts of Interest associated with lobbying

- To minimise risks associated with lobbying and improper influence, agencies need to ensure they have a process for staff to declare any conflict of interest in relation to a decision, record the conflict, document how the conflict will be managed, and ensure the ongoing management of the conflict is done in a transparent manner until it is resolved, particularly when it has involved lobbying or other forms of advocacy.



- For government board appointees, conflicts of interest should be declared and considered as early as possible and prior to a person being nominated or appointed to a board. The nominating person (including the Minister) should confirm in writing that all potential, perceived or actual conflicts have been declared and considered, and that they either do not prevent the nomination or there is a plan in place to manage them appropriately.

Training and awareness about lobbying and improper influence

A culture of awareness and integrity is the best defence against undue influence. Officials must ensure that staff are fully aware of their responsibilities under the [Integrity Act 2009](#) in relation to lobbying and are alert to the other strategies and tactics that may be used to improperly influence their decision-making. This includes ensuring staff are aware of their agency's policy on receiving gifts or other benefits, and that accepting them, even as permitted under the policy, may still result in improper influence, or the perception of improper influence, on decisions.

Staff in high-risk roles should also be provided with regular training on managing contacts with interested parties as part of their regular training requirements.

Recordkeeping about lobbying contacts and decision-making

All records such as diary entries, file notes, meeting agendas and minutes need to be managed in accordance with the [Public Records Act 2023](#) and in a way that connects the records to the decision-making process and makes it easy for anyone authorised to enquire into the process to identify and access them. Some public records are created as part of a business process, for example, when sending or receiving an email.

Agencies and government representatives should:

- regularly remind staff and government representatives who have contact with lobbyists about the requirement to create or capture public records.
- undertake regular internal audits of lobbying processes for compliance with recordkeeping requirements, including the adequacy of frameworks and training delivered to government representatives.

Transparency is key to preventing corruption. To this end, agencies should consider publishing details of contacts with lobbyists under the agency's publication scheme as provided for in the [Right to Information Act 2009](#).



Further information and resources

- [Integrity Act 2009](#)
- [Local Government Act 2009](#)
- [Public Records Act 2023](#)
- [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994](#)
- [Right to Information Act 2009](#)
- CCC, [Corruption Prevention Advisories](#)
- Office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner: www.integrity.qld.gov.au
 - [Queensland Lobbyists Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Queensland Lobbying Register](#)
- Public Sector Commission, [Post separation employment provisions](#)
- Queensland State Archives, [General retention and disposal schedule](#)
- Queensland Government, [Queensland Ministerial Handbook](#)

All Queensland legislation is available at: www.legislation.qld.gov.au



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