



INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT

GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Renewing our democratic system

For too long vested interest groups and wealthy power brokers have been able to undermine and influence our democratic system. A resilient democracy depends on all levels of Government being transparent in how they make decisions. The Greens will always fight for a transparent and accountable Government.

Politicians of all persuasions should recognise that the public interest is best served by a clear separation between politics and business, which is sadly not the case in Western Australia. It's time to protect our democratic processes from undue influence, this includes: overhauling rules and regulations in regards to political donations; limiting access to Members of Parliament for lobbyists from for-profit organisations; and ensuring there are stronger regulations in place in regards to ex-Ministers taking on roles that exploit their special knowledge or connections.

In order for our government to be transparent and accountable, all Western Australians should be confident that they can access information if they need it. Robust Freedom of Information (FOI) laws, well-resourced independent watchdogs and Offices like the Information Commissioner are vital in ensuring that any Government is accountable to the people that elected them and that the decisions being made are in the public interest. Whistle-blowers also play an important role in uncovering corruption and criminal activity and need to be given adequate protections.

The Greens will always stand up for accountability and transparency to make sure that our democratic system and the people of Western Australia's interests are protected.

The Greens will

- Fight for donations reform
- Limit Lobbyist powers and influence
- Ensure protections for whistle-blowers
- Strengthen FOI provisions
- Advocate for further investment in the Office for the Information Commissioner
- Support a national Independent Commission Against Corruption

> DONATIONS REFORM

Meaningful political donation reform is essential in the fight against corruption. Currently political donations can be (and have been) given by developers and others that have financial stakes in governments decisions. This is dangerous for our democracy. The Greens WA support significant donations reform in WA. The Greens will advocate for:

- Bans on political donations from for-profit corporations, including developers.
 - Declaration of donations over \$1000 in real time.
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Donations to political parties from for-profit corporations undermine our democratic system. The Greens recently launched a website called *Democracy for Sale*¹. This website presents donation data to the public in an accessible format and shows the number and dollar value of donations being made to political parties by corporations and lobby groups.

The role of donations in influencing political judgement and integrity is all the more important given the degree of secrecy major projects are now shrouded in under this government. The Perth Freight Link project is a key example of this.

The controversial Perth Freight Link, including 'Roe 8', was announced suddenly by the Liberal Government before the 2013 federal election, and \$1.2 billion has been committed to date without a business case or cost benefit analysis ever being released publicly. The contract was awarded to a consortium of companies led by Leighton Holdings (now known as CIMIC) - a massive donor to the Liberal party. Leightons' have donated almost \$700,000 to the National and WA Liberal parties².

Donations by corporations bidding for government contracts is a clear conflict of interest and undermines the trust we place in government decision making. It is time to ban political donations from for-profit corporations, and protect the integrity of our decision making processes.

The Greens WA will work toward real time declaration of donations over \$1000 to ensure accountability and transparency.

It is undemocratic that those with money and wealth are able to buy political influence on issues that matter; this cannot be allowed to continue.

> LIMITING LOBBYISTS' INFLUENCE

We need to protect our democracy; an important part of that is making sure there are checks and balances in regards to how for-profit interests can access Members of Parliament (MPs). While there have been some positive

¹[1] <http://democracyforsale.net/>

² Democracy for Sale, *Search AEC Data*, <http://democracyforsale.net/search-aec/>

legislative change recently in limiting lobbyists influence,³ these changes didn't go far enough; there are still significant improvements that need to be made to ensure that our system is uncorrupted and free of undue influence.

The Greens WA will introduce legislation that will:

- Expand the definition of 'lobbyist' so that includes for-profit corporations and organisations employing in-house lobbyists, many of whom are in a position to influence government policy.
- Expand disclosure requirements to include, in a timely manner: when the lobbying occurred; who stood to benefit; who was lobbied; the subject matter of the lobbying; and the meeting outcome.
- Adopt meaningful sanctions with appeal rights to apply to MPs, public servants and lobbyists.
- End the revolving door between politics and big business, by prohibiting ex-Ministers from working in a role which exploits their special knowledge or connections gained as a Minister for a period of five years.

Ministers have a great deal of discretionary powers that makes it inappropriate for corporations to be able to buy their time. To ensure this isn't the case the Greens WA will introduce a bill to prevent the promotion of functions, gatherings or events to raise funds for a political party or purpose in a way that suggests that attendees will gain access to a Minister. This bill was introduced by Alison Xamon in 2012 and the Greens will seek to re-introduce it again.

These changes are important to ensure that we have a robust democracy where our representatives are making decisions in the best interest of all Western Australians.

³ Integrity (lobbyists) Bill 2014 was assented to by the WA parliament on the 11/07/2016: <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=2D016C276139A5F348257D9B0034F293>

> PROTECT WHISTLEBLOWERS

Whistle-blowers have been responsible for bringing to light corruption and other illegal activities; we rely on them to keep our democratic system robust.

The Greens are committed to introducing legislation which will improve and expand current whistle-blowing protections within WA, including:

- Expanding the categories of people who can make disclosures to include former employees, people on work experience, contractors and subcontractors;
- Capacity to escalate a disclosure should the disclosure not be acted on in an appropriate or timely way;
- Support being made available to disclosers, including counselling and legal support;
- Criminal indemnity provisions to be made more flexible in order to encourage disclosure;
- Disclosers not to be penalised or pursued if they choose to withdraw or not pursue the complaint;
- Protection to be made available for people in the public sector;
- Enabling disclosure to third parties such as journalists or MP's (subject to limiting provisions); and
- Ensuring disclosers are protected from reprisals or detriment.

> STRENGTHEN FOI PROVISIONS

Freedom of Information provisions are very important in ensuring an accountable and transparent government. Too often the Government has hidden bad deals behind commercial-in-confidence or cabinet-in-confidence excuses. The public should have access to documents and information; currently the government can use lengthy FOI processes to prolong or even refuse to release documents.

The Greens WA would change the onus of proof, so that information is assumed to be available to the public unless certain criteria restricts its release. People should be able to access information without forcing them to go through the formal hoops of an FOI request. Information should

only be withheld if it is contrary to the public interest to release it.

Information gathering, storage and publication is becoming increasingly efficient thanks to new technology. The Greens WA will move legislation that will require all government departments to proactively release information including their budgets and contracts, publishing the information in an easily searchable format.

The Greens WA would advocate for more FOI staffers within each government department. The Greens WA support transparent, accountable government that includes the public having easy access to information in the public interest.

> INVEST IN OFFICE FOR THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The office of the Information Commissioner plays a vital role in ensuring that our Government – no matter who they are – are accountable. This very necessary part of our democracy is woefully underfunded, allowing Government to get away with dodging questions and hiding behind commercial in confidence, when they should release information in the public's interest. The Greens will advocate for increased funding to guard against corruption of our democracy. .