



16 June 2008

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
The Senate
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members

I write in relation to your invitation for submissions to the Lobbying Code of Conduct Inquiry and make the following comments. I understand that the Committee is to report on the adequacy and application of the Lobbying Code of Conduct.

I am supportive of measures to enhance the independence and integrity of Government processes and believe that it is vital that there is free and open access to government institutions in a democracy. I believe that lobbyists can improve the functioning of a democracy by assisting individuals in organisations with advice on public policy processes and facilitating contact with relevant government representatives. However, I also believe that electors in a democracy are entitled to know who is seeking to influence the outcome of the decisions that are made by government and that the adequate regulation of lobbyists will assist in better informing the public.

In 2007 I introduced the Lobbying and Ministerial Accountability Bill into the South Australian Parliament which provides for the disclosure of lobbying of senior public officials as well as a public register of lobbyists and a code of conduct for senior public officials. In drafting my bill I was guided by recent developments in Western Australia, Victoria and overseas, as well as the bill put forward by Bob Brown in the Senate.

I agree with the Code's principles of engagement with Government representatives, in particular that lobbyists should not engage in corrupt, dishonest or illegal conduct. I also support the requirement that the Register of Lobbyists be publicly accessible to promote transparency in dealings between lobbyists and Government. I believe there is a case for some exemptions from registration eg for communications made by a public official in their official capacity, by a government, a media organisation or in a public speech or in the course of judicial proceedings.

However, I am concerned about the proposed exemption from registration for peak organisations such as unions or employer groups. I believe that the Code of Conduct should apply to all members of both Houses of Parliament and should be extended to organisations which lobby on their own behalf.

Yours sincerely

Bob Such MP JP
Member for Fisher

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