

## Dr Sophie Scamps 'Ending Jobs for Mates' Private Member's Bill – Fact Sheet

### What is being announced:

- Federal Member for Mackellar, Independent Dr Sophie Scamps MP introduced her *Transparent and Quality Public Appointments Bill 2023 ('Ending Jobs for Mates Bill')* in the House of Representatives on Monday 6 March.
- The Private Member's Bill, drafted in partnership with [The Centre for Public Integrity](#), seeks to end cronyism and the 'jobs for mates' culture that has eroded public trust in government.
- The Bill was seconded by the Federal Member for Indi, Independent Dr Helen Haines MP.
- The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has estimated it would cost \$3 million per year to implement Dr Sophie Scamps MP's proposed independent appointments process.
- Research by The Australia Institute has found the vast majority of voters back an independent public appointments process. In fact:
  - **68% believe the Government should be limited to appointing candidates who have been shortlisted by an independent selection panel – exactly what Dr Scamps' Bill proposes.**
  - Only 15% believe the Minister should be able to choose whoever they want.

### How Sophie's Bill will work:

- If legislated, the Bill would create a Public Appointments Commissioner (PAC) and departmental Independent Selection Panels (ISP) overseen by a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Appointments (PJCA).
- Up to half the members of the PJCA may be drawn from the government, but the Chair (who has a casting vote) must not – ensuring its independence from the government of the day.
- The Bill would apply to all major Commonwealth public appointments, including roles such as the National Anti-Corruption Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and Members of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.
- The PAC and departmental ISPs would be responsible for implementing a transparent and independent recruitment process, including:
  - publicly advertising the criteria for the role (as determined by the Minister);
  - assessing all applicants against the selection criteria, as well as on the basis of quality, experience, and integrity, and with a view to promoting diversity.
- At the end of the recruitment process, the PAC and departmental ISPs would provide Ministers with a shortlist of at least three candidates to choose from, and a written statement certifying their appropriateness for the role. That statement must be tabled in Parliament once the appointment is made.
- Importantly, the Minister would be unable to select someone who is not on that shortlist or add candidates to the list.

- Even more stringent requirements exist for ‘significant integrity officer appointments’ (specified public appointments with higher powers). For those appointments, a former superior court judge must be included on the ISP, and the PJCA must be notified of the appointment, which must in turn notify both Houses of Parliament. Significant integrity officer appointments include:
  - the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
  - the Australian Electoral Commission
  - the Australian Human Rights Commission
  - the Australian National Audit Office
  - the Australian Public Service Commission
  - the National Anti-Corruption Commission
  - the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
  - the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman
  - the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
  - the Office of the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security, and
  - the Office of the Public Appointments Commissioner.

#### **Recent examples of political appointments that Dr Scamps MP’s Bill seeks to address**

- [Research from The Grattan Institute found](#) nearly 1 in 10 of all federal government appointees have a “direct political connection” while this figure rises to 21% of among those positions that are well paid, prestigious, and/or powerful.
- The history of party-political appointments to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). Analysis by [The Australia Institute found](#) up to 40% of appointments to the AAT under the Morrison Government were party friendly ‘jobs for mates’ style political appointments.
- The Morrison Government’s appointment of a former fossil fuel executive [as chairman of the Climate Change Authority](#).
- The Morrison Government’s appointment of [fossil fuel executives](#) to the national Covid Recovery Commission at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic – at a time when the government was trying to justify its so-called “gas-led recovery”.
- The appointment by the then Infrastructure Minister Barnaby Joyce of a former local mayor, who was also [a self-described supporter of Joyce](#), to head up Infrastructure Australia following a recruitment process that was defined by [“an informal chat”](#).

**Quote attributable to Dr Sophie Scamps MP:**

*“More than a decade of cronyism and party-political appointments to important public positions have eroded trust and integrity in our democracy. Australians have seen a fossil fuel executive appointed as chair of The Climate Change Authority; a mining and fossil fuel executive put in charge of the National Covid Commission at the height of the pandemic, while the AAT is to be abolished as a result of cronyism and ‘jobs for mates’ style appointments.*

*Australians deserve to be able to trust the institutions that underpin our democracy, so it is crucial that the appointment process for important public positions is not only based on expertise, but is also transparent and free from undue political interference. My Bill sets out a process to achieve just that.*

*While it was heartening that, just five days after I briefed the government on my ‘Ending Jobs for Mates Bill’, the Albanese Government announced a review into public sector board appointments, this review does not go far enough. The appointment process must be addressed far more broadly to include all accountable authorities, not just boards, and the shortlisting of candidates must be taken out of ministerial hands. I urge the Albanese Government to adopt this Bill to help restore trust and integrity in our politics.”*

**Quote attributable to The Hon Anthony Whealy KC, Chair of the Centre for Public Integrity:**

*“The current lack of a legislated, transparent and independent process risks important public appointments being made on a partisan basis.*

*Australians must be able to have confidence that public appointments will act in the public interest. Dr Scamps’ Bill establishes a comprehensive framework for the making of all major public appointments, and we urge the Parliament to support it and end once and for all the ‘jobs for mates’ culture that has had such a destructive impact on public trust in government.”*

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