

**YOUR
INDEPENDENT
FOR MACKELLAR**



VOTE 1
**Dr
Sophie
SCAMPS**

Bringing integrity back to politics – my policies for a stronger democracy

Over the last three years I, like most Australians, have looked on in horror and dismay as standards in Parliament have slipped to an embarrassing low.

The current government has misused taxpayer money for party political rorts and pork barrelling on a scale like we have never seen before. During this period, we have also seen scandal after scandal in our parliament from the reprehensible treatment of women to Ministers acting as if acceptable standards of behaviour do not apply to them.

Australians have lost trust that their elected representatives have their best interests at heart. From the sports rorts saga, to the blatant waste and pork-barrelling of taxpayer funds in the commuter carpark scandal, it is clear we need independent authorities to oversee the use of taxpayer funds.

The influence of donors and lobbyists over our elected officials is also clear for all to see. We need to reform donation disclosure rules in Australia so we can be confident that our democracy isn't being sold to the highest bidder.

It's time to restore integrity and a sense of decency into politics and create a culture of accountability and trust in parliament. We need a series of connected reforms to stamp out corruption, level the playing field and end the practice of cash for access. I look forward to doing that by:

- 1. Supporting a strong federal anti-corruption commission**
- 2. Strengthening the institutions that keep the federal government in check**
- 3. Reforming Australia's political donation laws**
- 4. Making lobbying transparent**
- 5. Preventing Ministers leaving office and moving immediately into industry jobs**
- 6. Introducing an enforceable code of conduct for politicians**
- 7. Introducing a merit-based process for appointing government advisors**
- 8. Introducing a merit-based process for government spending programs**
- 9. Introducing standards of honesty in election campaigns**
- 10. Limiting political party spending on ads**

*Sophie
Scamps*

Dr Sophie Scamps
Independent candidate for Mackellar



1. Supporting a strong federal anti-corruption commission

It is over three years since Scott Morrison first promised a Commonwealth anti-corruption commission¹. However, despite making this promise ahead of the 2019 election, there is still no Federal anti-corruption commission to help hold our elected officials to account.

In fact, the Commonwealth is the only Australian jurisdiction that doesn't have an anti-corruption commission to prevent, detect and stop corruption. This is despite there being cross-party support for a federal anti-corruption commission, after Liberal MP Bridget Archer voted to support² Helen Haines MP's *Australian Federal Integrity Commission Bill 2020*³.

As the Member for Mackellar I would support Helen Haines MP's *Australian Federal Integrity Commission Bill 2020* to help create a strong federal anti-corruption commission and restore integrity in Australian politics.

2. Strengthening the institutions that keep the federal government in check

Democracies require independent institutional checks and balances to keep our elected officials accountable. However in Australia, a number of bodies have come under attack by the government, have been defunded, or stacked with 'friendly' former politicians. For example, in early April the Administrative Appeals Tribunal was stacked with former Liberal MPs, advisors and staffers⁴.

A healthy democracy also requires a free and fair media landscape. Australia ranks 25th in the world for press freedom⁵. This low ranking comes after a sustained attack on press freedom by the Coalition government. This ranking is too low for a liberal democracy, and Australia's media must be able to do their job without fear of retribution.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Establish independent oversight for appointments to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- Secure sufficient funding for the functions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Commissioner so that FOI requests can be actioned in a timely manner
- Increase protection for charities, whistle-blowers, and other civil society organisations so they don't face funding cuts for engaging in advocacy
- Ensure our national broadcasters (the ABC and SBS) are adequately funded and advocate for the implementation of recommendations made in the Inquiry into Press Freedom⁶
- Ensure the Australian National Audit Office is adequately funded over the long term

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-13/scott-morrison-creates-federal-integrity-commission/10614658>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/17/helen-haines-leaves-door-open-to-pursuing-national-integrity-commission-before-election>

³ https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/legislation/bills/r6597_first-reps/toc_pdf/20137b01.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/04/pru-goward-among-six-liberal-linked-appointments-by-coalition-to-administrative-appeals-tribunal>

⁵ <https://rsf.org/en/australia>

⁶ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/PressFreedom/Report



3. Reforming Australia's political donation laws

Thirty-seven per cent of the money that was donated to Australia's major parties in the 2020-21 financial year had no identifiable source⁷. This equates to millions of dollars in money flowing from secret sources to the Labor, Liberal, Greens and Nationals parties. With this level of secrecy, Australians cannot be confident that political decisions are being made in the national interest.

Research from the Centre for Public Integrity also shows almost \$1.5 billion dollars in secret contributions have flowed to federal political parties since FY 1999⁸. It is clear our political donation and disclosure laws need serious reform to help increase transparency in our democracy and to restore public trust in our politicians.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to*:

- Lower the donation disclosure threshold to \$2,500 (indexed and aggregated) from the current threshold of \$14,500
- Legislate more regular donation disclosures to ensure candidates, political parties and associated entities must disclose donations fortnightly
- Broaden the definition of donation to include all contributions that pose a risk of having an undue influence on parliamentarians. For example, payments made in return for membership subscriptions and attendance at events and fundraisers of candidates, political parties, and associated entities.

**These changes would be legislated by amending the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth)*

4. Making lobbying transparent

Australians have a right to know who is lobbying our government and what influence they have on our democratic process. There is evidence that at any one time, hundreds of lobbyists have free reign to walk the corridors of Parliament and potentially influence policy decisions⁹.

The continued secrecy and backroom deals that go on in Parliament must stop. In NSW, Queensland and the ACT for example, Ministers are compelled to publish their diaries on a regular basis so the public knows who is meeting with our publicly elected officials. The same rules should apply at a Commonwealth level.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Compel Federal Ministers to publish their diaries on a regular basis
- Introduce legislation to create a lobbying register that requires in-house and third-party lobbyists to disclose who they've met with, when and the topics of discussion

⁷ <https://www.acf.org.au/fossil-fuel-industry-donates-big-to-major-parties>

⁸ <https://publicintegrity.org.au/source-of-1-5-billion-in-party-income-hidden-from-public-view/>

⁹ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/backstage-in-canberra-who-is-lobbying-our-mps-20190925-p52up4.html>



5. Preventing Ministers leaving office and moving immediately into industry jobs

Since 1990 more than a quarter of former federal Ministers or assistant Ministers have taken up roles with special interest groups after political life¹⁰. Most recently former Defence Minister Christopher Pyne left his role as Defence Minister to take a job at consultancy EY, as a defence lobbyist¹¹.

When politicians move directly from a position of great public power and trust into a lobbying role for a private interest, it undermines the integrity of the parliamentary system and creates systemic issues in our democracy. This needs to change.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Update the current Ministerial Standards to ensure the Lobbying Code of Conduct that covers post-ministerial employment is enforceable. At present it is not.
- Increase the period that restrictions apply to post-ministerial employment in special interest roles from 18 months to three years

**These changes would be made through changes to the current Ministerial Standards¹²*

6. Introducing an enforceable code of conduct for politicians

At present, there are lower professional standards in our Parliament than in any other workplace in Australia. There has been a litany of examples of illicit relationships between MPs while Ministers that have been found to have broken the Ministerial standards are moved to the backbench before many are reinstated to Cabinet positions.

When I watch Question Time, the behaviour I see is disrespectful at best, with MPs on their phones and the Prime Minister turning his back when opposition MPs or crossbenchers are asking questions.

I want to see future parliamentarians set the standard for workplaces around Australia.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Support the implementation of all 28 recommendations in the Set the Standard Report by Kate Jenkins, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission¹³
- Advocate for an enforceable Code of Professional Conduct in line with Helen Haines MP's Commonwealth Parliamentary Standards Bill 2020 (Cth)¹⁴

¹⁰ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-24/lobbying-gifts-jobs-relationships-and-donations-affect-democracy/10282852?nw=0&r=HtmlFragment>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jun/28/christopher-pyne-and-the-revolving-door-of-mps-turned-lobbyists>

¹² <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/statement-ministerial-standards-3.pdf>

¹³ https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_set_the_standard_2021.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bid=r6598



7. The introduction of a merit-based process for appointing government advisors

Appointing a fossil fuel executive to lead Australia's National COVID-19 Recovery Commission¹⁵ is symptomatic of the issues facing the integrity of advisory appointments.

Australia's COVID-19 recovery commission should have been focused on the health emergency, rather than focusing on how taxpayer money could help increase profits for fossil fuel companies. This appointment shows Australia needs an independent body to oversee government appointments to ensure they are made on the basis of merit.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Support a review of national advisory bodies and Institutions who influence federal government policies
- Implement an independent merit-based appointment process to ensure that there are no conflicts of interests

8. Introducing a merit-based process for government spending programs

Public procurement in Australia is estimated to be at least \$70 billion annually¹⁶. However we have seen a number of examples in recent years of government awarding millions of dollars in procurement contracts without an open or competitive tender process¹⁷. In addition, rampant pork-barrelling means taxpayer funds for infrastructure are going to marginal seats for political reasons rather than where they are needed most.

To prevent this misuse of taxpayer money, we need to implement more stringent processes for evaluating and awarding government contracts.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Develop a strong legislative framework for procurement that enshrines merit-based evaluation and value for taxpayer money in procurement processes
- Support the adoption of e-procurement to improve market access and competition and mitigate against corruption risks
- Support a Reserve Bank-style body that controls the majority of Commonwealth Infrastructure funding and allocates it based on transparent cost-benefit analysis

¹⁵ <https://fossilfuel.watch/whos-involved/>

¹⁶ <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/information/australian-government-procurement-contract-reporting-update-2019>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/nov/26/brisbane-company-worth-just-8-when-awarded-385m-nauru-offshore-processing-contract>

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9. Introducing standards of honesty in election campaigns

At present it is not illegal for political parties or candidates to tell lies in election campaign advertising. The 2019 election saw a litany of lies rolled out by multiple parties¹⁸ – and this erodes the public's trust in our democracy.

It is illegal for corporations or charities to make false or misleading claims in advertising, the same standard should apply to our politicians and political parties.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Support the passing of Independent Zali Steggall MP's *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Stop the Lies) Bill 2021*¹⁹
- Create a complaints process through the Australian Electoral Commissioner (AEC) where members of the public can report misleading or deceptive material
- Provide the AEC powers to order a retraction of and apology for the misleading content

10. Limitations on political party spending on ads

There is currently no cap on the level of advertising that a political party or candidate can spend during an election campaign. This means candidates and parties backed by billionaires, can potentially use their personal wealth to get election outcomes that support their business interests

We do not want a democracy that can be bought by the highest bidder.

As the Member for Mackellar I will work to:

- Amend the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth) to introduce spending caps for candidates and political parties

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/may/02/lies-damn-lies-and-campaign-material-the-biggest-fibs-of-the-election-so-far>

¹⁹ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_LEGislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bid=s1319