

20.08.2024 Media release: Albanese Government hypocritical on jobs for mates

Attributable to Dr Sophie Scamps, MP for Mackellar

It seems that despite its pre-election promises to clean up politics, the Labor government is continuing the tradition of appointing “mates” to well-paid government positions without a transparent or independent selection process.

The appointment of the former premier of Queensland is the latest example. She may be the best person for the job, but how do we, or the government for that matter, know? Was it a captain’s pick without an independent or transparent selection process? This undermines people’s trust in our public institutions.

Palaszczuk, of course, takes the place of the previous Coalition Government’s appointment to the Australia Post board of Tony Nutt who was a Liberal party director.

Attached is a list of appointments that demonstrate this government also has an entrenched ‘jobs for mates’ culture.

The government needs to urgently adopt my Ending Jobs for Mates private member’s bill, to clean up appointments and restore confidence that lucrative government jobs are being awarded to the best candidates.

The Albanese Government promised to do things differently after a decade of cronyism by the former Coalition Government. The jobs for mates’ culture was so pervasive under the Coalition that the Government said it needed to abolish the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to address political stacking.

Anticipating the introduction of my ‘Ending Jobs for Mates’ Bill, the Government announced a review by former Public Service commissioner, Lynelle Briggs, into Commonwealth board appointments. It was announced in February 2023.

“Being on a government board should be about what you know, not who you know.” Minister for the Public Service, Katy Gallagher said at the time.

Eighteen months later - it’s still nowhere to be seen. My simple question is - why? This report should be released now for the public to see.

In an answer to a question on notice in December 2023 the Treasurer said: ‘The report is currently being considered by Government.’ Freedom of information requests have failed to unearth it.

Cronyism and party-political appointments to important public positions erode trust and integrity in our democracy. It’s time to act now to enact an independent and transparent merit-based process as outlined in my bill.

For further information: Anne Davies 0408223875

Attachment:

Jobs for the Boys and Girls under Albanese

Annastacia Palaszczuk - (August 2024) appointed a director of Australia Post on approximately \$107,000 a year. While 17 years as premier of Queensland may well qualify her, where was the process or advertising of the position?

Terri Butler- (August 2024) appointed Deputy President Fair Work Commission. Butler, the former labor member for Griffith, was an industrial and employment lawyer prior to entering parliament. Workplace Relations Minister Murray Watt's office said: it was part of the Albanese government's efforts to "restore balance to the Commission"

Greg Combet - Former Labor minister was first appointed to the [National Net Economy Agency \(precursor to the Net Zero Authority\)](#) and then appointed chair of the Future Fund to replace Former Liberal minister, Peter Costello.

Chris Barrett - former chief of staff to former Treasurer Wayne Swan was appointed chair of the Productivity Commission by the current Treasurer, Jim Chalmers. He was deputy secretary of the Economic Division in the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance, so he may well be qualified, but again the appointment process is opaque.

Craig Emerson - Another former Labor minister, who was appointed as Independent Reviewer of the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct (10 January 2024) He's also been appointed to the National Competition Council (examines role of competition institutions to ensure they're fit-for-purpose)

Chris Ketter- a former Queensland senator who was appointed Australian Consul-General San Francisco and senior trade commissioner in July 2023 by Trade minister Don Farrell. Prior to entering Parliament, Ketter was Queensland Branch Secretary of the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association. Farrell also held positions in the union.

Captains picks in the public service appointments

Sttephanie Foster - Foster was appointed secretary of the department of Home Affairs, after her boss, Mike Pezullo resigned. FOI documents show this was "a captain's pick" by the then minister Clare O'Neil, with no merit selection or independent process.

Kathryn Campbell - Despite having adverse findings against her, Campbell, the former head of the Department of Human Services during the robodebt era, was appointed to a \$900,000 per-year AUKUS Advisor role. When the Royal Commission report was released she was stood down from the Aukus job and later resigned.