

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Mates over merit lives on; Scamps re-launches ‘Ending Jobs for Mates’ Bill after four years of inaction from Labor**

Independent Federal Member for Mackellar Dr Sophie Scamps is acting on the recommendations of an independent review to introduce a mandatory cooling-off period for former politicians applying for major Commonwealth appointments.

Today Dr Scamps will introduce an updated version of her *Transparent and Quality Public Appointments Bill 2026* (‘Ending Jobs for Mates Bill’) in the House of Representatives.

Seconded by Federal Member for Calare the Hon Andrew Gee MP, the Bill establishes an independent, transparent process for all major Commonwealth appointments to ensure selections are based on expertise, not political connections.

The Bill also requires a six-month cooling-off period for former politicians and senior political staff, and 18 months for former Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries, before they can be appointed to major public roles.

These measures implement key recommendations of the ‘No Favourites’ Review into Public Sector Board Appointment Processes (the Briggs Review), commissioned in March 2023 shortly after Dr Scamps briefed the former Attorney-General on her proposed bill.

Delivered to Government in August 2023, and kept under wraps for 27 months, the Briggs Review identified ongoing concerns about the transparency, independence and merit of senior public appointments.

It found that board appointments had, at times, favoured politically connected individuals, fuelling perceptions of patronage and eroding public confidence. The review concluded that reform is needed to restore independence, transparency and merit-based selection.

Four years after the Albanese Government promised stronger integrity and transparency at the 2022 election, meaningful reform to the appointments system continues to be left unaddressed.

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

*“It's been three years since I first introduced this bill and sadly major public roles are still being appointed behind closed doors with little to no transparency The Briggs Review made it clear: without enforceable rules, patronage and favouritism creep into the system.*

*“It's bad for democracy and bad for Australians when governments choose who suits them best, not who is best for the job.*

*“I am taking this action because the government has not.*

*“The Briggs Review was hidden from the public for almost two years, only to be quietly released on a Friday before Christmas. And instead of acting on its detailed integrity recommendations, the Government has put forward a token half-page of vague ‘principles’ - seven dot points that leave board appointments largely at the discretion of Ministers. It's window dressing, not reform.*

*“Since the Bill was first introduced, the Commonwealth has established several major new bodies, including the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Environment Protection Authority (National EPA), yet the appointment of their leaders remains entirely at ministerial discretion, without any legislated requirement for a transparent or merit-based process.*

*“Australians deserve a system where these high-paid and powerful appointments are based on merit, not mateship. This bill puts an end to the quiet deals and back-room pathways that have damaged confidence in government for far too long.*

*“Good governance is not a partisan issue. Every Australian is better served when the best person gets the job, not the best-connected person. It doesn't just look bad - it dampens the morale and capability of our public institutions, ultimately weakening the quality of decisions that affect people's lives.”*

**Quotes Attributable to Hon Andrew Gee MP:**

*“Jobs for mates erodes public trust and confidence in government and our public institutions.*

*“Making political appointments to government boards has become an accepted part of Australian political life that’s been going on for far too long. It’s time to clean this up and bring the practice to an end.*

*“I don’t think it’s too much to ask that we have the most qualified people being appointed to key public positions and that there’s actually an open, independent and transparent process around selections.*

*“If as a nation, we’re serious about restoring confidence in government, this is surely a vitally important place to start.”*

**Quotes Attributable to Geoffrey Watson SC - Centre for Public Integrity Board Member:**

*“It’s not just about the selection of the best candidates, it’s also about perception - the current process seems to be that jobs are recycled amongst friends and insiders, without the transparency and independence that is essential to ensure the best quality candidates end up in our important public sector roles.”*

**ENDS**

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## BACKGROUND

**Drafted in partnership with the Centre for Public Integrity, the Bill will establish:**

- A **Public Appointments Commissioner (PAC)**;
- Departmental **Independent Selection Panels (ISPs)**; and
- A **Parliamentary Joint Committee on Appointments** to oversee the process without a government-led majority, guaranteeing independence from the government of the day.
- A new mandatory safeguard of a six-month cooling-off period to prevent recent politicians or political staffers from being appointed to major public roles.

The PAC and ISPs would implement a transparent, merit-based recruitment process for all major Commonwealth public appointments, including positions such as the National Anti-Corruption Commissioner, the Information Commissioner, and members of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

At the conclusion of each process, the PAC and relevant ISP would provide the responsible Minister with a shortlist of at least three qualified candidates, ensuring that final appointments are made from a genuinely independent and merit-based field.

Research by The Australia Institute in 2022 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.