



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Overview of State Liberals' Policy

**presented by
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Current situation

- ✓ Culture of secrecy
- ✓ Lack of documentation to support decisions
- ✓ Lack of accountability



Our Approach

- ✓ Major overhaul required to lift the veil of secrecy
- ✓ Decisions must be:
 - transparent;
 - accountable; and
 - accessible.
- ✓ Open Government agenda
- ✓ More support for the Ombudsman as Public Information Commissioner



Culture of Openness

- ✓ All government decisions must withstand public scrutiny.
- ✓ Open information rules will apply to:
 - Ministers
 - Heads of departments;
 - Statutory office-holders;
 - Appointees to government boards;
 - State Service employees; and
 - Employees of Government Business Enterprises.
- ✓ All FOI requests to be treated seriously
- ✓ On time, or it's free



Limits on Cabinet Secrecy

- ✓ Executive Council and Cabinet meeting documents should be available after the fact
- ✓ Publication of agendas on the internet
- ✓ Cabinet deliberations and decisions need not be disclosed



Better reporting

- ✓ Annual reports to be tabled in Parliament detailing:
 - Average response times to FOI requests
 - Summary of reasons for any refusals
- ✓ Compliance reports to divide requests into three categories depending on complexity



Push, not pull

- ✓ Why wait until information is requested?
- ✓ Information should be made publicly available unless there is a specific reason not to release it



Open Government Act

- ✓ *Freedom of Information Act* to be replaced by an *Open Government Act*.
- ✓ The *Open Government Act* will:
 - support a Freedom of Information regime;
 - apply the Transparency, Accountability and Accessibility test to the public sector.



Monitoring Transparency

- ✓ Annual reports to include details of measures taken to be transparent, accountable and accessible.
- ✓ Tasmanian Government Gazette will be published on-line, and be available for subscription on-line.



Support for Ombudsman

- ✓ Longer than 30 days for extensive external reviews
- ✓ Deputy Ombudsman to be appointed
- ✓ Ombudsman to be Public Information Commissioner
- ✓ Adequate resources essential



Powers of Auditor-General

- ✓ Auditor-General ensures taxpayers' money is spent efficiently and effectively
- ✓ Audits of whether agencies have taken adequate steps to make information publicly available



Training FOI officers

- ✓ Better training to ensure consistency in handling FOI requests
- ✓ Justice Department to coordinate Open Government approach and assist smaller agencies
- ✓ Support for FOI officers



Parliament that works

- ✓ Right of Reply
- ✓ Question Time deadlines
- ✓ Resources to scrutinise government
- ✓ Halt decline of Parliament sitting days
- ✓ Ministerial Code of Conduct
- ✓ Accountability of GBEs
- ✓ Merits-based appointments to boards and committees



Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission

- ✓ Power to investigate allegations of public sector corruption
- ✓ Commission to report directly to Parliament
- ✓ Training to ensure a culture of ethical conduct
- ✓ Stronger whistleblower laws

