

MEDIA RELEASE

APGRA welcomes three-yearly review of Parliament House access policies and supports balanced transparency reforms

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The Australian Professional Government Relations Association (APGRA) has welcomed the commencement of the scheduled three-yearly review of policies governing access to the private areas of Australian Parliament House, saying it provides an important opportunity to ensure the framework remains fit-for-purpose, secure and transparent.

The review, flagged by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in correspondence to the Presiding Officers of the Parliament, forms part of the regular requirement to re-examine Parliament House access policies every three years and will consider the conditions and requirements for unescorted access, including for sponsored pass holders.

APGRA President Sally Mackenzie said regular review of access arrangements was appropriate and consistent with maintaining public confidence in parliamentary processes. “A three-yearly review is a sensible and established mechanism to ensure Parliament House access settings remain relevant, robust and responsive to changing circumstances,” Ms Mackenzie said.

“APGRA supports periodic review that strengthens transparency and integrity while recognising the legitimate and important role of professional engagement in a democratic system.”

APGRA exists to promote high ethical standards, transparency and integrity in government relations practice. APGRA believes that government relations practitioners must be honest, open and transparent at all times in their dealings with government and clients, and committed to the highest standards of professional conduct.

In its submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry into access to Australian Parliament House by lobbyists, APGRA outlined strong support for the existing access and vetting arrangements, including police background checks and parliamentary oversight, which ensure that unescorted access to Parliament House remains a privilege subject to rigorous safeguards.

APGRA noted that access arrangements apply to a wide range of stakeholders who require regular access to Parliament House as part of their professional roles, including representatives from non-government organisations, universities, charities, industry bodies, unions and the media.

“Access arrangements play an important role in supporting the efficient operation of Parliament,” Ms Mackenzie said.

“They reduce administrative burden on parliamentary staff and allow Members and Senators to manage full meeting schedules during limited sitting periods.”

APGRA reaffirmed its support for transparency measures that complement existing arrangements, including the Commonwealth Lobbying Code of Conduct and the publicly available Register of Lobbyists, which already disclose the identities of registered lobbyists and the clients they represent.

APGRA cautioned against reforms arising from the review that would duplicate existing public registers, disproportionately target a single category of access holders, or add unnecessary administrative burden without delivering meaningful transparency outcomes. However, the APGRA said it remains open to constructive discussion on options that enhance rigour within Parliament House access policies, where such measures demonstrably strengthen integrity and public confidence.

“APGRA supports transparency in principle,” Ms Mackenzie said.

“As part of this regular three-yearly review, reforms should build on existing frameworks, avoid unintended consequences and ensure Australia continues to benefit from ethical, informed and open participation in public policy development.”

APGRA said it looks forward to engaging constructively with Parliament’s Presiding Officers, the Department of Parliamentary Services and other stakeholders as part of the review process.