

1. Introduction

My name is Kelly Joyce, a small business owner, mother, and lifelong resident of regional Queensland. I am submitting this letter not as an expert, but as an everyday Australian who believes our government systems should be transparent, accountable, and built on integrity.

In recent years, many Australians have lost trust in the way our public money is managed. It feels as though the decisions that affect our lives most — from education and healthcare to infrastructure and national defence — are happening behind closed doors.

This Bill presents an opportunity to rebuild that trust by opening the curtains on how consultancy and services contracts are awarded, managed, and disclosed to the public.

2. Why Transparency Matters

Transparency is not just a moral issue — it's a financial one. When we can see where our money goes, waste and corruption shrink.

When we can't, they grow in the dark.

Australia currently ranks 18th in the world for public sector transparency (Transparency International, 2024), but we can and must do better.

Recent headlines show the cracks:

- Consulting scandals have exposed conflicts of interest and misuse of privileged information.
- The Auditor-General continues to flag weaknesses in government procurement and compliance.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) processes are increasingly slow and restricted, leaving citizens in the dark.
- Political donations and gifts are only disclosed annually, long after decisions have been made.

As Australians, we are expected to pay our taxes on time, follow the law, and trust our government. It's only fair we expect the same level of honesty and accountability in return.

3. My Concerns with the Current System

1. Consultancy dependence:
Many departments now outsource strategic decision-making to private consulting firms at enormous cost. This creates conflicts of interest and limits public oversight.
2. Opaque procurement:
While AusTender publishes contracts, details are vague, delayed, or hidden behind commercial-in-confidence clauses. This shields potential misuse of funds.
3. Lack of timely disclosure:
By the time information becomes public, decisions have already been made, and accountability is lost.
4. Limited public understanding:
Government spending data is often buried in technical language and PDFs that ordinary Australians can't interpret.

4. Recommended Reforms

1. Real-Time Transparency Dashboard
Require all Commonwealth contracts and grants above \$10,000 to be published within 7 days, showing the supplier, amount, purpose, and postcode where the funds are spent.
2. Public Oversight Committee with Citizen Representation
Establish a standing oversight group including community representatives, not just politicians, to review high-value contracts quarterly.
3. Conflict of Interest Register
Mandate that all consultancy firms disclose conflicts, clients, and political donations before bidding for government work.
4. Independent Whistleblower Channel
Strengthen protections and anonymity for public servants and contractors who report waste, corruption, or misconduct.
5. Reinforce FOI and Public Access
Ensure Freedom of Information laws are expanded — not weakened — and agencies are funded adequately to respond within 30 days.

6. Quarterly “Where the Money Went” Reports

Publish readable, visual summaries of government spending per department, so Australians can easily see where taxpayer dollars are going.

5. International Benchmarks

Countries such as Estonia, Ukraine, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have already proven that open data builds public trust and saves money.

- Estonia allows citizens to see every time their data is accessed by a government official.
- Ukraine’s ProZorro e-procurement platform saved billions and reduced corruption by requiring all contracts to be visible and open to competition.
- New Zealand’s Open Government Partnership reports have shown increased citizen participation and better policy outcomes through transparency.
- The UK mandates all government spending above £25,000 to be published monthly.

Australia deserves to be among these nations leading the world in honest governance.

6. Closing Statement

I urge this Committee to seize this opportunity.

Australians are not asking for perfection — we are asking for truth, sunlight, and accountability.

We want to see the value of our taxes in our schools, hospitals, and communities — not buried in consulting invoices or untraceable grants.

Thank you for considering this submission. I would welcome the opportunity to speak at any hearings to represent the perspective of everyday Australians who want their government to lead, not mislead.

Sincerely,

Kelly Joyce