

NSW Parliament leads by putting public interest first in policy

Australian first: NSW Parliament passes historic precedent to enhance good governance.

In a landmark decision for Australia, the NSW Legislative Council has voted unanimously to enshrine public interest at the heart of government policy. All legislation presented for its consideration must now be accompanied by a “Statement of Public Interest” that clearly demonstrates how policy proposals will benefit the people of NSW.

Policymakers must now propose an evidence-based “business case” for new proposals to demonstrate rigour and genuine public interest. Ministers, their advisers, and public servants must answer **six questions** or risk having their proposals delayed or rejected in the NSW Upper House:



1. Need: What is the evidence-based need for the policy?
2. Objectives: What is the policy’s public interest objective?
3. Options: What alternative policies and mechanisms were considered?
4. Analysis: What were the pros, cons, benefits, and costs of these options?
5. Pathway: What is the implementation plan, timeline and who will administer it?
6. Consultation: How were affected stakeholders engaged and considered?

This decision by the NSW Legislative Council - a first in any Australian jurisdiction - is a demonstration of genuine action on integrity, transparency and good governance in policy-making. The NSW Legislative Council has set a leadership precedent for parliaments across Australia to embrace.

The motion to adopt a Statement of Public Interest was moved in the NSW Legislative Council by Penny Sharpe, Labor’s leader in the Upper House, and supported by Damien Tudehope, leader of the NSW Government in the Upper House. One Nation’s leader, Mark Latham and The Greens’ Abigail Boyd spoke in favour of it, and the motion was supported by the Animal Justice Party and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

The Statement of Public Interest was advocated by the Evidence Based Policy Research Project, a non-partisan, not-for-profit, volunteer organisation. Find out more about the Evidence Based Policy Research Project and the Statement of Public Interest: www.evidencebasedpolicy.org.au.

Members of the Evidence Based Policy Research Project: Percy Allan AM, Glenn Barnes, Rebecca Bishop, Sarah Davies AM, Verity Firth, Russell Grove PSM, Janette Hartz-Karp, Malcolm Irving AM, Carol Mills, Peter Shergold AC, Martin Stewart-Weeks, and Richard Whittington.