

# Influence

In the second instalment of the Gatekeepers and Influence Peddlers special report, **Daniel Emerson** investigates which West Australians can get access to the decision makers in the State Government. Highly valued by business, these influence peddlers can make the difference between a business proposition getting on to the Cabinet table and not even making it on to a minister's desk.



**Richard Ellis:** Exxon Mobil senior public affairs adviser. Used to be Liberal Perth division president and Colin Barnett's chief-of-staff.



**Emiliano Barzotto:** TBH Niche managing director. Michelle Roberts' former CoS retains links with the public service.



**Sarah Browne:** FTI Consulting Perth director of public affairs. Mr Barnett is fond of his switched-on former policy officer.



**Blair Stratton:** Synergy general manager of strategy and corporate affairs. Had a reputation as a head-kicker as CoS to Peter Collier.



**Mike Smith:** Synergy and iNet chairman. Has a background in strategic consultancy spanning five decades.



**David Utting:** David Utting Corporate proprietor. Former West journo operates a boutique Nedlands consultancy.



**Joanne Webber:** Chamber of Minerals and Energy media and public affairs manager. Mr Barnett's media advisor until 2011.



**Deidre Willmott:** FMG's external relations director. As the Premier's CoS, she understood the workings of government like few others.



**Megan Anwyll:** Magnetite Network executive director. The former ALP Kalgoorlie MP heads the magnetite industry group.



**John Halden:** Halden Burns principal. Former ALP State secretary. Deals mostly with Federal and SA Labor.



**Fay Duda:** Duda and Wills Consulting managing director. Well-connected as the Liberals' Perth division president.



**Paul Plowman:** Plowman and Co managing director. Mr Barnett's original director of communications



**Glen Kelly:** South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council chairman. Influential as the point man in



**Richard Court:** KPMG special adviser, National Hire Group chairman. WestTrac director. Can get



**Kim Keogh:** Atlas Iron consultant. Was WA Liberal Party president when Mr Barnett was opposition



**Paul Murray:** GPR Morning Show host. The West Australian columnist. The former editor of The West takes

obbying is a funny old line of work, particularly in Perth.

In no other profession do its practitioners have to walk such a fine line between over-selling and under-selling themselves.

Owing to the sensational 2006-07 Corruption and Crime Commission hearings exposing the methods of master lobbyists Brian Burke and Julian Grill, there is a certain stigma attached to being seen as especially good at it.

Ask a lobbyist about their job and many will point out that anyone off the street wanting to put an issue to a government minister is free to contact their chief-of-staff and, if it is worthy of consideration, will get a hearing.

But if it were that easy, there would be no need for lobbyists at all, which is why biographies on their websites are quick to point out what previous government roles they have occupied.

The message is unwritten but clear: "Retain us and we can get you that 'in'."

■ Daniel Emerson



The nod and wink has substance, too, because the lobbying outfits which rise to the top during any given electoral cycle are the ones with the strongest links with whichever side of politics is in power.

It is no-coincidence that the most successful lobbyists during the Labor years were the party's former premier and powerbroker, Mr Burke, and a member of the cabinet he led, Mr Grill.

These days, the leading firm is GRA Everingham, headed by former Liberal State director Paul Everingham, whose father was once the party's national president and the Northern Territory's chief minister.

Parliamentary documents show GRA Everingham had contact with the Premier's office 48 times last year alone, as well as with the office

of ministers Troy Buswell (18 times) and Bill Marmion (12).

Another operative with good access to the Government is Casey Cahill, Perth director of Kream & Gavin Anderson, a former spin doctor for Liberal Party elder and former premier Richard Court.

FTI Consulting employs Sarah Browne, its astute strategic director of corporate and public affairs, who happens to be the niece of Noel Crichton-Browne and used to work in Colin Barnett's office.

Lobbyists on the winning side of politics say they get better access to government simply because whoever is in power needs to trust they will not leak to the Opposition.

But those on the wrong side complain bitterly that the government of the day keeps their ex-colleagues on the teat in a version of "jobs for the boys".

Parliament is currently debating laws strengthening the regulation of lobbying, which the Barnett Government introduced after savaging the close links between the former government and Messrs Burke and Grill.