

# Commercial lobbying and political contributions: an Australian scoping review

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## Abstract

**Objective:** Many of the most effective and equitable policies to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases threaten the interests of powerful corporations. A first step for public health advocates seeking to challenge powerful corporate interests is to understand the nature and extent of corporate political practices. This scoping review explored public health research on two political practices in Australia: lobbying and political donations.

**Methods:** We searched six databases, two Google Advanced searches and 11 Australian public health websites. We screened 2866 documents in total, and extracted information about political practices, industry actors and datasets.

**Results:** 62 studies published between 1980 and 2021 were identified, analysing public health advocacy, policy submissions, direct engagement with government representatives and political donations. We extracted data from 14 studies that focused on direct engagement and/or political donations. Most focused on 'unhealthy commodity industries.'

**Conclusions:** Analysis of lobbying and political contributions in Australia is a nascent but expanding area of public health research. We discuss opportunities for future research to strengthen the evidence base and support public health advocacy to counter harmful corporate practices and promote and protect population health.

**Implications for Public Health:** Countering powerful commercial interests requires greater investment in understanding corporate political activities.

**Key words:** lobbying, political donations, industry

## Introduction

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease and cancer, are the leading cause of illness and death in Australia. One in two Australians has an NCD, and in 2018, 5 million years of healthy life were lost due to NCDs.<sup>1</sup> There is robust evidence about which policies most effectively prevent and reduce the burden of NCDs and deliver the best value for money, for example, alcohol advertising restrictions and taxes on sugary drinks.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, like countries around the world, implementation of these policies is patchy and slow.<sup>3,4</sup> Harmful industry practices, such as lobbying from the tobacco and sugary drink industries to oppose taxes on their products, are a key barrier to implementing these policies.<sup>5</sup>

A first step towards growing the capacity of public health advocates and practitioners to counter harmful industry practices is to deepen our understanding of these commercial actors and their activities.<sup>6</sup>

The commercial determinants of health (CDoH) is a field of research which focuses on how commercial actors influence health outcomes. This includes digital marketing targeting children,<sup>7</sup> manipulating scientific evidence,<sup>8</sup> hazardous and exploitative working conditions,<sup>9</sup> or political activities that undermine the development and implementation of policies designed to protect population health (but that may harm commercial profits).<sup>10</sup> Corporate political activities encompass a range of strategies, including campaign financing, meeting with government officials, campaigns to influence the public, developing policy alternatives, and using third party organisations (such as fake grassroots organisations, or 'astroturf' organisations) to engage with politicians and the public.<sup>10,11</sup>

One of the challenges facing research and advocacy around corporate political activities is that these activities are poorly disclosed to the public. International studies on corporate lobbying and political

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donations have documented the inconsistent and poor-quality data on this topic.<sup>12–15</sup> Many governments provide little transparency around lobbying activities, for example incomplete lobbyist registers, minimal requirements around open agendas or ministerial diaries, and few details about the purpose of the meeting or the topics.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, many of the richest datasets have come from freedom-of-information requests or documents released during litigation.<sup>17</sup>

In light of these challenges, we sought to understand whether and how the Australian public health community has engaged with the issue of corporate political practices. In the following sections, we set out our methods and main findings. In the discussion, we reflect on the current state of Australian research on corporate political activities and suggest opportunities for future research and advocacy.

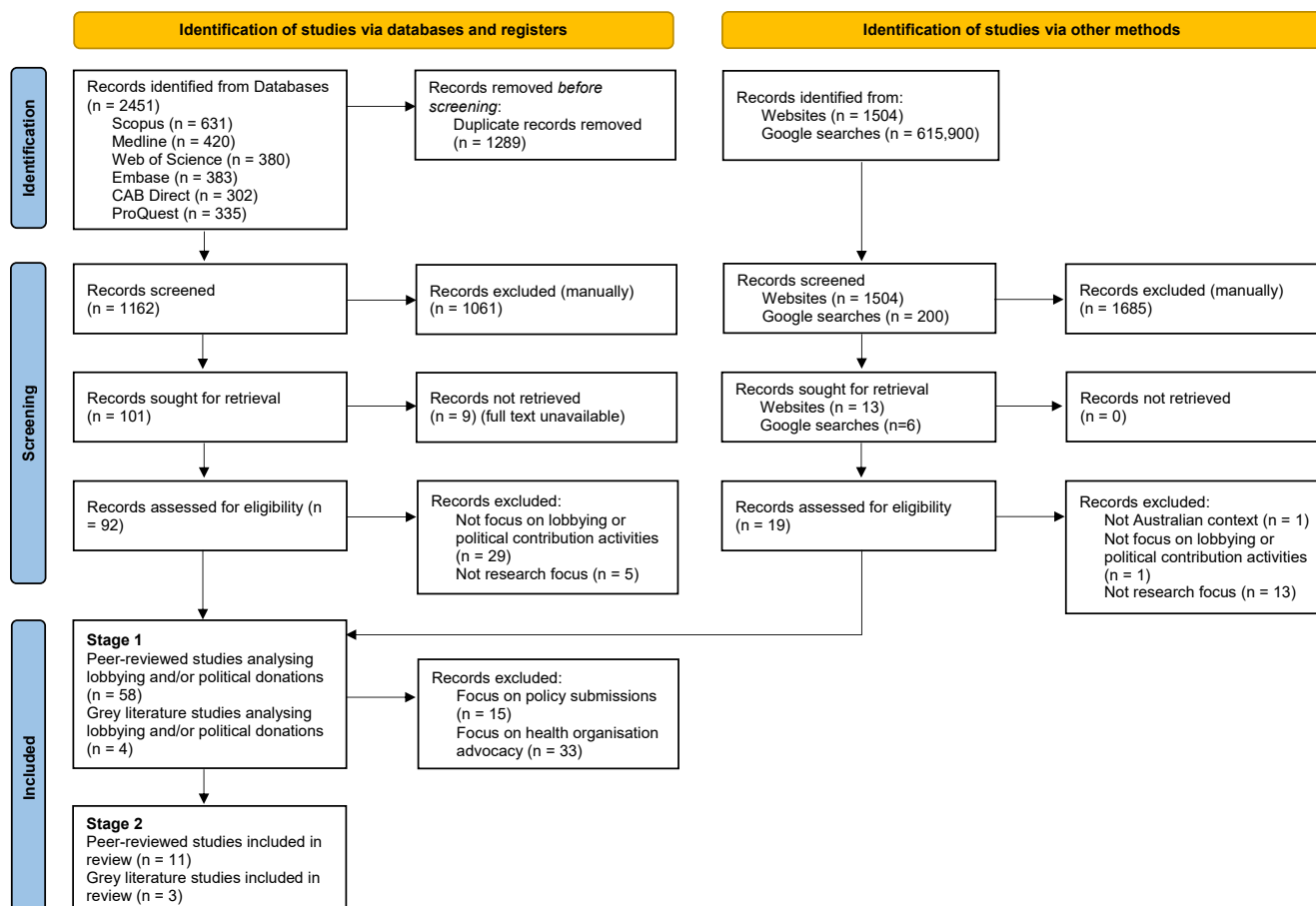
## Methods

Following the methodological framework set out by Arskey and O'Malley,<sup>18</sup> our review followed five steps: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant literature; (3) screening the literature; (4) 'charting' the data; (5) summarising and reporting the results. This approach is suitable as it provides an overview of an emerging research field and can identify research gaps.<sup>19</sup> Our research questions asked: (1) what is the extent of public health research undertaken in Australia on lobbying and political contributions and (2) what are the methods and datasets that have been used in this research?

JLN and KC developed a set of search terms comprising four conceptual categories: Australia, lobbying, political contributions, and health. With the support of a health librarian, JLN completed searches for these terms across six databases: Scopus, Medline, Web of Science, Embase, CAB Direct, and ProQuest. Searches were tailored to meet database requirements and limited to titles, abstracts and key words, as broader searches yielded irrelevant results. Our search strategy for Web of Science was TS=(Australia\*) AND TS=(lobb\* OR "interest group\*" OR "pressure group\*" OR "outside group\*" OR (advoc\* NEAR/5 polic\*) OR (advoc\* NEAR/5 govern\*) OR "advocacy coalition\*" OR (political NEAR/5 contribution\*) OR (political NEAR/5 donation\*) OR (campaign NEAR/5 contribution\*) OR (campaign NEAR/5 donation\*) OR "campaign financ\*" OR "political financ\*" OR "political funding" OR "campaign funding") AND TS=(health OR disease\* OR ncd\*). Databases were searched on 23 September 2021. All searches were downloaded and imported into the citation management software Endnote X9 where duplicates were removed. 1162 documents (excluding duplicates) were identified in the database searches (See the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram in [Figure 1](#)).<sup>20</sup> Remaining citations were exported to Excel for concurrent screening of titles and abstracts.<sup>21</sup> MJ screened all titles and abstracts, and JLN double screened 10% of the studies. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved by JLN and MJ.

Following Godin et al.'s<sup>22</sup> approach to systematically analyse the grey literature, we conducted two Google Advanced searches, one

Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram



focused on lobbying and the other on political contributions using similar search terms as for the database searches. These were limited to 'filetype:pdf' as most relevant documents were in that format. We scanned the first 100 results for each search. Based on our knowledge of the Australian public health sector, we also conducted a targeted search of 11 Australian public health organisation websites using the search terms 'lobby' and 'political' (as more targeted searches did not reveal any results and use of the term 'campaign' yielded documents discussing the organisation's own advocacy). The same inclusion and exclusion criteria detailed above were used to screen the grey literature. Relevant studies were downloaded for a full text review. Additional file 1 contains the details of all peer-reviewed and grey literature search strategies and inclusion and exclusion criteria.

During the full text stage of screening, we identified 62 papers that analysed political donations, lobbying, or both. To ensure a manageable scope for data extraction, we excluded 48 papers that focused either on the advocacy strategies of health organisations (n=33) or on policy submissions as a form of lobbying (n=15). These studies demonstrate scholarly attention to the topic of lobbying; however, they do not align with our more targeted focus on research analysing the lobbying practices of commercial organisations and lobbying as direct contact with government representatives.<sup>23</sup> While we excluded these studies from our data extraction and charting, we included them in our timeline of Australian research on lobbying and political contributions, as they help reveal the breadth and nature of research on lobbying and political contributions.

Eleven peer-reviewed studies and three non-peer reviewed reports were charted in Excel. Data were extracted under the following categories: article details (authors, year, title, journal); political activity details (activity(s), commercial sector(s), specific commercial actors, government sector, jurisdictional level, purpose); data (sources, quantity, quality); methods (time spent collecting and analysing data, tools, availability of coding sheets or other resources); research

translation (how findings were presented); conflicts of interest (funding, conflicts of interest statements) (Additional File 2).

## Results

Between 1980 and 2021, 62 studies were published analysing lobbying, political donations, or both (Figure 2). More than half of these studies documented the lobbying and advocacy campaigns of health organisations (33/62, 53%), and further, 15 studies (24%) analysed policy submissions. Of the 14 studies included in our final sample, 11 analysed lobbying (18%), nine analysed political donations (15%), and six analysed both (10%). In addition to these political practices, they also analysed a range of other political strategies, included the revolving door, policy substitution, corporate social responsibility, constituency building, and others. Table 1 presents a summary of our key findings.

Except for the report from the Grattan Institute, all of the studies focused on 'unhealthy commodity industries,' specifically food and beverages, tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. Four of 14 studies (28%) focused on the food and beverage industries,<sup>5,24-26</sup> two on tobacco,<sup>27,28</sup> and two on the alcohol industry.<sup>29,30</sup> The remainder covered more than one industry or referred more broadly to industries selling unhealthy commodities. Most of the peer-reviewed studies (8/11, 73%) and all three reports named specific commercial actors. These were typically industry associations or clubs, such as the Australian Hotels Association (n=7 studies),<sup>27,29-34</sup> Australian Food and Grocery Council (n=4 studies),<sup>5,24,26,33</sup> Clubs New South Wales (n=3),<sup>27,29,31</sup> Australian Beverages Council (n=2),<sup>5,25</sup> National Farmers Federation (n=1),<sup>5</sup> and Canegrowers (n=1).<sup>35</sup> Few studies named specific companies, with those identified including Wesfarmers, Coles and Woolworths (n=3 studies),<sup>29,30,32</sup> Coca-Cola (n=3 studies),<sup>5,26,33</sup> Nestlé (n=2),<sup>26,33</sup> McDonalds (n=2),<sup>26,33</sup> Mars (n=1),<sup>33</sup> and Mondelez (n=1).<sup>36</sup> Other actors identified included lobbying firms, professional services firms, trade unions, entities associated with major political parties, and non-profit groups.

Figure 2: Timeline of studies on lobbying and political contributions in Australia

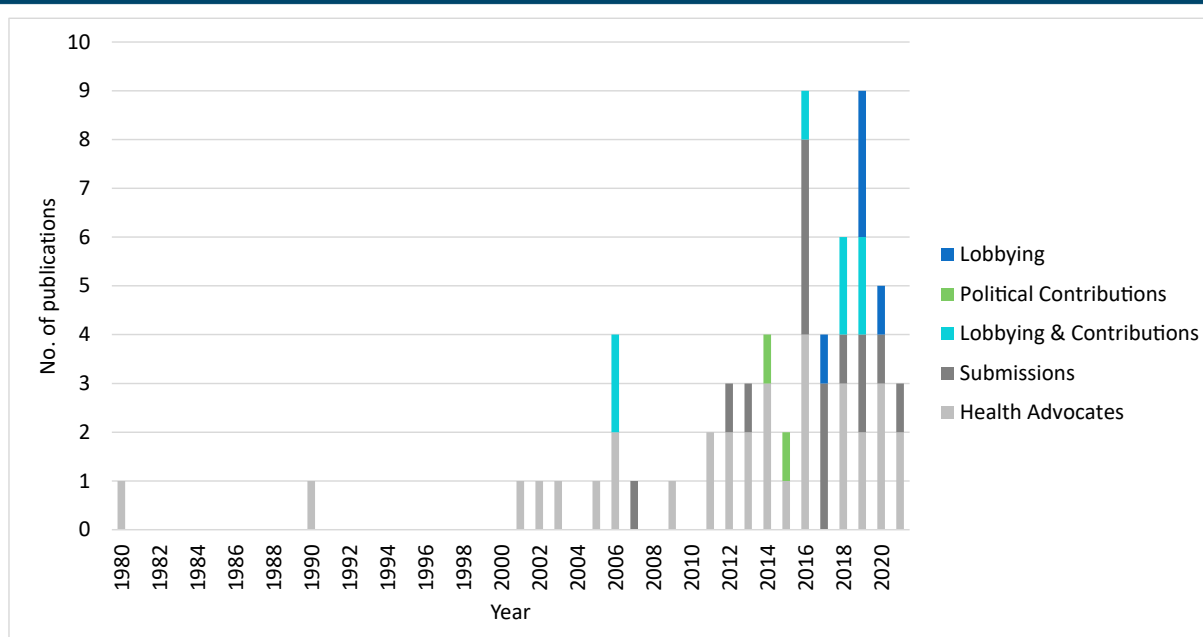


Table 1: Public health research about lobbying and political contributions in Australia

Lead author	Title	Year	Topic(s)	Industry focus	Named actors	Jurisdictional level	Government sector	Government actor type	Purpose detail	Data sources	Data demographics	Coding frameworks shared
Hooker	Structural elements in achieving legislative tobacco control in NSW, 1955-95: Political reflections and implications	2006	Lobbying, political donations	Tobacco	None	State, federal	Health	Politicians	None	Interviews	Former politicians	None
Bryan-Jones	Political dynamics promoting the incremental regulation of secondhand smoke: a case study of New South Wales, Australia	2006	Lobbying, political donations	Tobacco	Australian Hotels Association (AHA), Clubs NSW	State	Government	Political parties, politicians	To avoid smoking bans in pubs and clubs	Interviews	Current and former politicians, political advisors, current and former health bureaucrats, tobacco control advocates, catering industry and labour union representatives	None
Thompson	Alcohol Industry Donations to Victorian Political Parties:	2014	Political donations	Alcohol	Cormack Foundation, Woolworths, Wesfarmers, Australian Hotels and Hospitality Association, AHA (Victoria), Crown Limited, Australian Leisure and Hospitality Group (ALH), GNT International, Fosters Group Ltd, Clubs NSW, The Australian Club	State	Government	Victorian branches of major political parties (Liberals, Nationals, Labor, Greens)	None	Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) data for donations	n/a	Appendix 1: Detailed breakdown of donations from the alcohol industry to Victorian Political Parties
Thompson	Alcohol Industry Donations to Queensland Political Parties	2015	Political donations	Alcohol	AHA, Clubs Australia, Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia, Wine Federation of Australia, Brewers Association, Wesfarmers, Treasury Wine Estates Ltd	State	Government	Queensland divisions of major political parties (Labor, Liberal, Katter Australian Party, Greens, Palmer United Party) and associated entities (Fadden Forum, Forward Brisbane Leadership, Labor Holdings Pty Ltd)	None	AEC data	n/a	Appendix 1: Detailed breakdown of donations from the alcohol industry to Queensland political parties
Thomas	Gambling advocacy: lessons from tobacco, alcohol and junk food	2016	Lobbying; political donations; taxation revenue; framing; influence science	Gambling, tobacco, alcohol and junk food industries organisations, peak professional bodies, local government organisations and academia	Clubs New South Wales; AHA	State, local	Government	Not discussed	None	Interviews	Non-government organisations, peak professional bodies, local government organisations and academia	Figure 1: Themes and sub-themes
Mialon	Maximising shareholder value': a detailed insight into the corporate political activity of the Australian food industry	2017	Lobbying; information and messaging, framing, shaping the evidence base, revolving door; financial incentives, constituency building, legal strategies, policy substitution, opposition fragmentation/destabilisation	Food industry	Coca Cola, Nestlé, McDonalds, Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC)	State, federal	Policy makers	Policy makers, politicians, media, health organisations/ opinion leaders	To avoid regulation	Interviews	Government, NGO, academic, nutritionist, former industry	Yes: ref to CPA framework
Roberston	Australian lobbyist registers are not serving the purposes they were designed for	2018	Lobbying	Industries selling 'unhealthy commodities'	none	State	Government	Ministers, parliamentarians, officials	None	Document analysis, web searches of lobbyist registers, phone calls and emails	Lobbyist registers and registrars	Table 1: summary of lobbyist registers maintenance and availability

(continued)

TABLE 1. Continued

Lead author	Title	Year	Topic(s)	Industry focus	Named actors	Jurisdictional level	Government sector	Government actor type	Purpose detail	Data sources	Data demographics	Coding frameworks shared
Wood	Who's in the Room	2018	Lobbying, political donations, revolving door	All	Many e.g., Adani, Australian Livestock Exporters Council, Franchise Council of Australia, Landbridge Group, Cormack Foundation, AHA, Coca-Cola, Nestle, McDonalds, Mars, Mondelez, AFGC	State, federal, transnational	Government	Politicians, public servants, political parties	Brief case studies in Appendix A (e.g. casino licensing, sugar tax, pharmaceutical pricing, climate change policy, pokies reform, greyhound racing), and also throughout text e.g. Wine Equalisation Tax	Australian Government Lobbyists Register, Ministerial diaries (NSW and Queensland), Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and State Electoral Commissions data	n/a	None
Kypri	If someone donates \$1000, they support you. If they donate \$100000, they have bought you'. Mixed methods study of tobacco, alcohol and gambling industry donations to Australian political parties	2019	Political donations, gifting	Tobacco, alcohol, and gambling industries, major supermarket chains (Coles and Woolworths)	Coles, Woolworths, AHA	Federal	Political parties	Political parties,	For immediate influence and long-term relationship-building, favour exchange	Australian electoral commission data on donations to political parties, and interviews	Donations data: Australian Electoral Commission. Interview participants: Current and former politicians, ex-political staffers, journalists, public health advocates, civil servant, lobbyist, senior police officer	Figures 1 and 2 (tobacco, alcohol and gambling industry donations to the Labor and Liberal parties)
Clarke	Investigating menu kilojoule labelling policy adoption from a political science perspective	2019	Lobbying, framing	Food industry	Quick Food Service Group, AFGC	State (VIC)	Health	Not discussed	Opposition to introduction of Menu Kilojoule Labelling Legislation policy in state of Victoria	Interviews, document analysis (policy documents, media reports), field observations (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services)	Politicians, political advisors, civil servants (policy officers as well as members of the executive), academics, and senior representatives of key public health NGOs and private organisations	Ref to ACF and MST analytical frameworks
Cullerton	Doctors rule: an analysis of health ministers' diaries in Australia	2019	Lobbying	Food industry	Australian Beverages Council, Nutrition Australia,	State (NSW and QLD)	Health	Politicians (health ministers and assistant health ministers)	NSW Healthy Choices in Health Facilities Policy (other topics linked to health advocates)	Ministers' diaries	Politicians (health ministers and assistant health ministers)	Yes - Tables 2-5
Friel	An exposé of the realpolitik of trade negotiations: implications for population nutrition	2019	Lobbying, revolving door, networks/ coalition building, media strategies, framing	'Industry' (in relation to nutrition and trade negotiations)	none	Federal, transnational (Australian trade policy)	Health, foreign affairs and trade	Politicians, policymakers, political advisors (trade)	Influencing trade negotiations to pursue own interest (industry and NGOs)	Interviews	Government officials, industry, public interest NGOs and academics	None
Robertson	The revolving door between government and the alcohol, food and gambling industries in Australia	2019	Lobbyist revolving door	Alcohol, food and gambling industries	Many - List of major lobbying firms and clients in Appendix A	Federal	Government	Not discussed	None	Australian Government Register of Lobbyists databases and related social network content, LinkedIn, lobbyist business websites, key informant interviews	Current lobbyists who self-identified as former government representatives, current politicians, journalists, former political staffers, public health advocates, current civil servants, current police	Tables 1 and 2: (Registered lobbyists who self-identified as former government representatives) Appendix A: (list of clients of major lobbying firms)
Sainsbury	Explaining resistance to regulatory interventions to prevent obesity and improve nutrition: a case-study of a sugar-sweetened beverages tax in Australia	2020	Lobbying, political donations, framing, policy substitution, corporate social responsibility	Soft drink industry	Australian Beverages Council, AFGC, Coca-Cola, Canegrowers (peak body for Australian sugarcane growers), National Farmers Federation	Federal	Government	political parties, politicians, policymakers	Campaign against SSB tax, specific mention of AFGC's Annual Industry Leaders Forum - opportunity for food industry to engage with government ministers and policymakers	Academic literature, parinfo (policy documents, parliamentary press releases, senate notice papers, government transcripts), Factiva (Australian media articles), websites of relevant NGOs, industry associations and other key policy actors	n/a	Table 1

Five studies identified a specific government sector that was lobbied—most commonly, the health sector (n= 4 studies, 28%)<sup>24,25,28,37</sup> and one study referred to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.<sup>37</sup> The remainder referred only to lobbying of ‘government’ or ‘policymakers’ more broadly. Four peer-reviewed studies identified specific policies or policy goals that were targeted by lobbying activities or political donations: to avoid smoking bans in pubs and clubs in New South Wales (NSW)<sup>27</sup>; a campaign against a national sugar-sweetened beverages tax<sup>5</sup>; to oppose Menu Kilojoule Labelling Legislation policy in Victoria<sup>24</sup>; to influence the NSW Healthy Choices in Health Facilities Policy.<sup>25</sup> The Grattan Institute report included several case studies detailing the influence of political practices (e.g., casino licensing, pharmaceutical pricing, climate change policy).<sup>33</sup> Three studies referred to the purpose of lobbying and political donations at a more general level, such as ‘to avoid regulation’,<sup>26</sup> ‘for long-term relationship-building’,<sup>32</sup> or to influence trade negotiations.<sup>37</sup> The remaining studies did not discuss the purpose of the corporate political practices.

The majority (8/11, 73%) of peer-reviewed studies reported data from interviews with key informants.<sup>24,26–28,31,32,34,37</sup> Other data sources identified included media reports (n=2 studies),<sup>5,24</sup> policy documents (n=2),<sup>5,24</sup> Australian lobbyist registers (n=2),<sup>34,38</sup> Ministerial diaries (n=1),<sup>25</sup> parliamentary transcripts and press releases (n=1),<sup>5</sup> field observations within a government department (n=1),<sup>24</sup> Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) data (n=1),<sup>32</sup> social media (LinkedIn) profiles of registered lobbyists (n=1),<sup>34</sup> and industry websites (n=1).<sup>5</sup> The three non-peer reviewed reports primarily used AEC and State Electoral Commissions data on political donations,<sup>29,30,33</sup> as well as the Australian Government Lobbyists Register,<sup>33</sup> and publicly disclosed Ministerial diaries (NSW and Queensland only).<sup>39</sup>

The majority (9/11, 82%) of peer-reviewed studies used a qualitative thematic approach to analyse data,<sup>5,24,26–28,31,32,34,37</sup> one conducted ‘document analysis’<sup>25</sup>, and one study provided no detail on data analysis methods (the non-peer-reviewed reports did not provide detail on their analysis methods either).<sup>29,30,33,38</sup> Four studies reported using NVivo to organise, code, and analyse data and one study reported using Atlas.<sup>24,26,31,34,37</sup> The remaining seven studies did not report using any tools or software. Few studies provided detail on their datasets or coding frameworks. Several referred to analytical frameworks used to organise and interpret data (such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework and Kingdon’s Multiple Streams approach).<sup>24</sup> All studies presented data in the form of quotes, tables, or a combination of the two. Two studies used basic charts.<sup>32,33</sup> No studies mentioned using any tools to visualise findings.

Only three of 11 peer-reviewed studies discussed challenges regarding the datasets accessed, with all three identifying incomplete data as a key challenge.<sup>25,34,38</sup> Two reports referred to high disclosure thresholds for political donations in Australia, along with lack of transparency and enforcement, as being major limitations of the data.<sup>29,33</sup>

## Discussion

Our scoping review found that the majority of public health research analysing lobbying and political contributions in Australia focuses on the activities of ‘unhealthy commodity industries’—namely tobacco, alcohol, food, and gambling. This focus is understandable, as these industries are strongly linked to health harms, including increased risk

of morbidity and mortality.<sup>40</sup> However, this narrow focus occludes many other industry sectors whose impact on health is less visible or direct. For instance, the Australian mining and property sectors are amongst the largest political donors in Australia, and there is strong evidence about the health harms linked to these sectors.<sup>41,42</sup> Yet to date, there has been little scrutiny of how powerful corporations in those sectors shape public health policies in Australia.<sup>35,43</sup>

Most studies included in our review were qualitative and interview based. These studies provided rich details about the how different stakeholders perceived the influence of corporate political activities and insights into some of the behind-the-scenes tactics that are not captured in public databases, such as the activities of lobbyists employed directly by companies. Interestingly, the grey literature reports from public health organisations engaged more with the larger datasets (e.g. the AEC political donations). Public health researchers could complement the existing qualitative research with empirical studies to identify the broader patterns of activities across industries and political jurisdictions. This will provide strong evidence base to advocate for improved conflict of interest policies or for better transparency and disclosure policies from governments.<sup>16,44</sup> Johnson and Livingston’s (2021) analysis of gambling industry donations<sup>1</sup> is an example of both the insights that can be garnered from empirical analyses, as well as the public attention and interest that this approach can generate (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation developed several media pieces drawing on the research).<sup>45,46</sup>

Our scoping review found that few academic or non-government organisation (NGO) reports provided details about their methodologies (e.g. how data were sourced, cleaned, coded, and analysed) or links to full datasets. Coding frameworks are useful to facilitate comparisons and linkages amongst different datasets. The Comparative Agenda Project, which classifies public policies in order to analyse changes in policy agendas, offers a useful precedent for linking complex frameworks across country and political contexts.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the corporate political activity framework developed by Savell, Gilmore<sup>48</sup> (now the Policy Dystopia Framework)<sup>10</sup> is a tool for classifying the different ways that corporations influence politics and has been adapted to analyse the alcohol and food industries, amongst others.<sup>49,50</sup> Efforts, such as these, to enable comparisons across different actors and political contexts, can help to understand the influence of different political, regulatory, and market contexts on corporate political activity.<sup>51</sup> To facilitate the development of monitoring tools or large-scale data repositories, it would be useful if researchers shared these frameworks in an open-access repository (for example, in something akin to GitHub). Some academic journals request that datasets be made available—a similar request could be made for coding frameworks.

Based on this review, and our experience in this area, we suggest several conceptual and technical directions for future research. Conceptually, links can be made across the aforementioned unhealthy commodity industries to identify common or dissimilar patterns of political practices.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, as the crux of the CDOH concept is that commercial organisations, irrespective of their industry, share common motives and practices, future research could expand beyond unhealthy commodities to consider other actors whose practices influence health such as mining, healthcare, finance,

<sup>1</sup>This paper was published outside the dates included in our scoping review.



and others.<sup>53,54</sup> There is also much to learn from political science scholarship that can help to interpret findings or shape research questions. For instance, large scale research of lobbyists in the United States differentiates between two “ideal” types of lobbyists: the “librarian,” with deep technical and policy expertise in a topic, and the “K Street Kingpin,” a generalist with significant political connections, and the different ways that they influence policy.<sup>39</sup> Applying this approach to research of the revolving door in the Australian lobbying industry (the movement of people between employment in the public and private sectors) can help to interpret the importance of different professional backgrounds.

There are also technical opportunities to support this research. One step is to map out public datasets that can be scraped and analysed, and to consolidate existing datasets, including those accessed through freedom of information requests. To support this work, we can identify and pilot tools to scrape, clean, and code large (often messy) datasets. For example, a project supported by JLN and the Australian Research Data Commons explored opportunities to use data science tools such as Python and Gephi to analyse and link lobbyist registers, donation returns, and ministerial diaries in Queensland ([https://github.com/ryananalytix/government\\_transparency](https://github.com/ryananalytix/government_transparency)). Alongside efforts to access this data, we can work to develop common coding frameworks and data dictionaries to facilitate collaborations and comparisons amongst existing studies, such as those included in this review.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, this work could support the development of well-designed, searchable databases for health organisations and NGOs to analyse and monitor the CDoH.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusions

Establishing the state of research in Australia can help to identify research gaps and areas for advocacy. This rapid scoping review highlights several insights about the nature of public health research on commercial political practices in Australia. First, most research focuses on a few industries and at the federal level. Second, most studies offer qualitative analysis of interviews or policy documents and use manual analysis methods. And third, analysis of lobbying and political contributions in Australia is a nascent but expanding area of public health research. Efforts to expand this evidence base would benefit from engagement with other issues that address the challenge of corporate power and influence in politics, including organisations involved in human rights, climate change, and democracy.<sup>6</sup> As concerns around political transparency gain national attention, there are key opportunities for public health advocates to engage on this topic to support political transparency and integrity.<sup>36,55,56</sup> If the ultimate aim of public health is to make the world a better place, that is a political challenge.

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## Author contributions

JLN conceived the study and JLN and KC collaborated on the design of the study. MJ and JLN contributed to the collection and analysis of data. JLN wrote the first draft of the paper and designed all tables and figures. All authors contributed to subsequent drafts and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of interest

JLN is the recipient of a fellowship from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. MJ is the recipient of an Australian Government Research Training Program Stipend Scholarship from the Commonwealth government. MJ has also received funding support from the Alliance for Gambling Reform and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education. MJ has not received any funding from gambling, alcohol or tobacco industries, or organizations acting on their behalf. The authors declare they have no other competing interests.



## Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable

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## Appendix A Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anzjph.2023.100073>.