# Transparency supports democracy: new search tool tracks industry influence

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and the Alliance for Gambling Reform have launched a new search engine tool that makes information on industry influence more accessible. The tool was developed with funding from Mannifera.

Using[Influence Engine](https://www.influenceengine.org.au/), people can discover various activities of corporations, including alcohol companies gifting alcohol, tickets and hospitality.

For instance, during this Parliamentary term alone, alcohol companies and lobby groups have delivered 86 gifting events to 52 politicians. That’s to one in four Members of Parliament.

This includes tickets and hospitality to sporting events such as the Australian Open, the Melbourne Cup, as well as gifts of alcohol over the value of $300.

Let’s break it down a little more.

## What exactly is industry influence?

“Industry influence” essentially refers to the practice of lobbying, where individuals or organisations attempt to sway government decisions and policies.

They may work to persuade lawmakers to support specific laws or to try stall laws that aren’t favourable to them. Activities of influence can include things like political donations and providing gifts.

Corporations and lobby groups work to protect their profits and undermine and delay any evidence-based policy.

## How does Influence Engine work?

Influence Engine operates similarly to other search engines you might be familiar with: you enter search terms, and relevant results are generated.

You can search the [Influence Engine](https://www.influenceengine.org.au/) for politicians' register of interest, such holding shares in corporations or receiving gifts or hospitality from them.

Influence Engine automatically scrapes data from the Parliamentary Registers of Interest every 24 hours and makes this data searchable.

Without this tool, the Registers are not freely available to search; the Registers as organised on the Parliamentary website have to be manually searched, taking many hours to access and collate information.

[Influence Engine](https://www.influenceengine.org.au/) was developed with support from funders, Mannifera, and FARE and AGR worked alongside stakeholders across the public interest and advocacy sectors to develop the tool.

## Why does this matter?

Democracy should be transparent and accessible for everyone.

The influence of alcohol lobbyists casts a shadow over political decision-making, often prioritising corporate interests over the health and safety of our communities.

By using tools like the Influence Engine, we create an environment for greater accountability which contributes to a stronger democracy.

The tool is freely available at <https://www.influenceengine.org.au/>