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Transparency is indispensable

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The government's move to prevent the tabling of documents detailing communications between itself and Woodside executives about the North-West Shelf gas project ("Government moves to block Woodside meeting details over gas project", July 21) raises questions as to what it wants to hide.

The government's argument – that the communications were intense, informal and familiar and as such did not give rise to "any inference of bias" – appears to be self-contradictory. If, as claimed, they "did not suggest the minister's decision-making process was flawed", one would have thought it was in the government's interest to table them.

On the other hand, if they lend support to the Australian Conservation Foundation's claim that "Environment Minister Murray Watt failed to consider the project's carbon pollution and its potential impact on the environment," there'd be every reason for the government to want them kept out of public view. Transparency is an indispensable element of a healthy democracy, especially when it comes to the assessment of consequential projects. The planet's health is at stake.

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