

Monday, 30 November 2020

## Law Council President, Pauline Wright, comments on the release of integrity report

*All comments to be attributed to Pauline Wright.*

The Law Council of Australia believes that release of the report into the integrity of the Australian Government could not have come at a better time.

*Australia's National Integrity System: The Blueprint for Action*, is a landmark report undertaken by Griffith University and Transparency International Australia and provides a significant outline for how Australia should work to building a more accountable system of government.

This report follows the release of the government's Exposure Draft into the Commonwealth Integrity Commission, earlier this month.

Australia is falling behind in its international obligations in its efforts to fight corruption, resist undue influence and protect the integrity of democracy.

That is why the Law Council welcomes the release of the *Blueprint*, outlining the actions needed to ensure a high integrity future, with the development of a new federal integrity commission a vital step in making sure Australian maintains a trustworthy government.

The Law Council has long advocated on many aspects of the *Blueprint*. This includes the call for the overhaul of whistleblower protection laws and the recommendation that the Australian Government work towards a comprehensive whistleblower regime, as an essential step to promote the exposure of corrupt conduct then investigated by the Commonwealth Integrity Commission.

As part of this position, the Law Council has long supported the establishment of a Whistleblower Protection Authority to oversee implementation of the whistleblower regime for both the public and private sectors. This includes establishing a Whistleblower Protection Commissioner to ensure protections from victimisation and reprisal for those people reporting corruption.

The Law Council believes that the current model of Commonwealth Integrity Commission as proposed in the government's Exposure Draft is problematic, due to the differing thresholds of conduct that will be deemed to be corrupt depending on whether it is engaged in by members of law enforcement agencies or members of public sector agencies.

For some time, it has been the position of the Law Council that the same conduct that is deemed corrupt in one context should be deemed corrupt in the other, and therefore there ought to be an alignment of powers between the two proposed divisions and the same broad definition of 'corrupt conduct' should apply.

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