

MEDIA RELEASE | Tuesday 1 September 2020

Former Judges and Majority of Australians Urge for Establishment of a Federal Integrity Commission in 2020

Today, the National Integrity Committee calls on the Morrison Government to release draft legislation for a National Integrity Commission. Such a body is required urgently to have the power to examine allegations of malfeasance and corruption at the most senior levels of Parliament and the Australian Public Service and restore trust in our democracy.

It has been nine months since Attorney General Christian Porter stated that legislation for the proposed Commonwealth Integrity Commission would be released 'shortly,' and 20 months since the consultation paper for the CIC was first released.

Meanwhile, with little to no transparency and even less accountability, the Government has been not only making major fiscal decisions, worth billions, but also setting policy which will have impacts of untold significance not only for the fight against the pandemic but also for the nation's long-term future.

The lack of transparency and accountability is dramatically demonstrated by the transition of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission to an Advisory Board and the establishment of the National Cabinet in lieu of COAG. Both are now veiled in the secrecy of Cabinet-in-Confidence, with no legislative underpinning.

The COVID Coordination Commission has had no clearly independent appointment process, opaque operations and the absence of a duty to publicly disclose conflicts of interest. These are issues of serious concern and will only further erode transparency and accountability, and ultimately the trust in our public institutions.

In these unprecedented times, appropriate transparency and accountability of Government decisions and a National Integrity Commission with teeth, has never been more critical in restoring the public's faith in our democracy.

Polling released by The Australia Institute today supports the call from the National Integrity Committee, and shows that three in four Australians (74%) support the establishment of a Commonwealth Integrity Commission this year.

The members of the National Integrity Committee auspiced by the Australia Institute are:
Mary Gaudron QC, former Judge of the High Court; Anthony Whealy QC, former Judge of the NSW Court of Appeal; Paul Stein AC QC, former Judge of the NSW Court of Appeal; Stephen Charles AO QC, former Judge of the Victorian Court of Appeal; David Harper AM QC, former Judge of the Victorian Court of Appeal; Margaret White AO, former Judge of the Queensland Court Appeal; and Carmel McLure AC QC, former Judge of the Western Australian Court of Appeal.

Media Enquiries: Anna Chang 0422 775 161