

# Open Letter on the Establishment of a National Integrity Commission

AN OPEN LETTER

## Dear Prime Minister Scott Morrison

Confidence and trust in government and public institutions is at an all-time low. When this confidence and trust is diminished, pessimism, divisiveness and conflict increase; and social cohesiveness is harmed. As a result, the economy and the welfare of all Australians suffers. Ultimately, as international experience has shown, democracy itself is threatened and may be irreparably damaged.

Governments ignore at their peril demands by citizens to combat corruption with vigor.

A major cause of the current deterioration in trust is the suspicion that corruption permeates many governmental decisions and actions. Corruption, broadly understood in this context, occurs when those in public office place private interests over the public good. The avoidance of corruption is an essential organising principle of our representative democracy.

Secrecy is at the core of corrupt conduct. Electronic communications and advanced developments in IT provide formidable means of concealing misconduct, which is difficult and expensive to combat. Those involved in large-scale corruption are usually well-organised, experienced, astute and wealthy.

A well-funded and properly resourced national anti-corruption agency, with overall jurisdiction to investigate all public decisions and conduct, and with appropriate powers and protections, is needed to combat them. The price of freedom, and freedom includes living in a society free from corruption, is eternal vigilance.

Existing federal integrity agencies lack the necessary jurisdiction, powers and know-how to investigate properly the impartiality and bona-fides of decisions made by, and conduct of, the federal government and public sector.

A National Integrity Commission is urgently needed to fill the gaps in our integrity system and restore trust in our democracy.

The National Integrity Committee has outlined a benchmark for designing a model integrity commission. It must have a broad jurisdiction and strong investigative powers, including public hearings, in order to adequately investigate and expose corruption and misconduct.

**We urge you to immediately establish a strong, effective and independent National Integrity Commission.**

**The Hon Sir Gerard Brennan AC QC**

Former Chief Justice, High Court of Australia

**The Hon Jane Mathews AO**

Former judge, Federal Court of Australia; former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

**The Hon David Ipp AO QC**

Former Commissioner, NSW ICAC; former judge NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Anthony Whealy QC**

Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Paul Stein AM QC**

Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Ken Handley AO QC**

Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Peter McClellan AM QC**

Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Murray Tobias AM QC**

Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Marcia Neave AO**

Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

**The Hon Bernard Bongiorno AO**

Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

**The Hon James Thomas AM QC**

Former judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

**The Hon Margaret White AO**

Former judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

**The Hon Mary Gaudron QC**

Former judge, High Court of Australia

**The Hon Jeffrey Miles AO**

Former Chief Justice of ACT; former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

**The Hon Stephen Charles AO QC**

Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

**The Hon David Harper AM QC**

Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

**The Hon Geoff Davies AO QC**

Former judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

**The Hon Henric Nicholas QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

**The Hon Bill Windeyer AM**

Former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

**The Hon David Kirby QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

**The Hon John McKechnie QC**

WA CCC Commissioner; former judge Supreme Court of WA

**The Hon Chris Steytler AO QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of WA

**The Hon Peter Lyons QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of Queensland

**The Hon Tony Fitzgerald AC QC**

Former judge, Federal Court of Australia; former President, Queensland Court of Appeal

**The Hon Margaret McMurdo AC**

Former President, Queensland Court of Appeal

**The Hon Alan Wilson QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of Queensland

**The Hon Geoffrey Miller QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of WA

**The Hon Betty King QC**

Former judge, Supreme Court of Victoria

**The Hon Wayne Haylen QC**

Former judge, NSW Industrial Court

**Judge Phillip Nase**

Former Queensland CMC Commissioner; former judge District Court of Queensland

**Judge Greg Woods QC**

Former judge, District Court of NSW

**Judge Stuart Campbell**

Former judge, County Court of Victoria

**Judge Sarah Bradley**

Former judge, District Court of Queensland

**Judge John Robertson**

Former judge, District Court of Queensland

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