



## STRONGER WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS KEY TO HOLDING 'BIG FOUR' ACCOUNTABLE, HEARS PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

The parliamentary inquiry into Ethics and Professional Accountability in the Consultancy Industry will today hear calls for comprehensive reform of Commonwealth whistleblowing laws to close the major gaps in accountability exposed in major Australian accounting and consulting firms like PwC.

Joint evidence to the inquiry from Transparency International Australia, Griffith University's Centre for Governance and Public Policy and the Human Rights Law Centre calls for a single Act to protect whistleblowers across all types of private sector entities – revealing that partnerships like the major accounting firms are not adequately covered by any existing laws, for the public or private sectors.

The groups will appear before the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations & Financial Services' Inquiry on Friday 6 October 2023 at 8.45am AEST. Their joint submission, *Loopholes, Gaps and Inconsistencies: Whistleblower Protections at the Big Four and Beyond*, also calls for:

- A consistent approach to upgrading the failing protections in the public sector *Public Interest Disclosure Act* and in the *Corporations Act* and other laws, being reviewed over the next 12 months; and
- A Whistleblower Protection Authority with power to enforce protections across all sectors, not just the public sector – as also recommended in 2017 by the same Committee.

***Professor A J Brown, from Griffith University's Centre for Governance and Public Policy and Transparency International Australia board member said:***

"The Parliamentary Joint Committee already recommended, six years ago, there must be comprehensive, consistent whistleblower protections across the public and private sectors. The scandals around the big consultants reinforce the need for total confidence that whether an employee is in the public, private or consulting sector, they are fully and equally protected for speaking up."

***Dennis Gentilin, former NAB whistleblower and Transparency International Australia advisor said:***

"Would be whistleblowers that have lost all confidence in their institutions need to know that there are arrangements in place that will protect them if they choose, at great personal risk, to come forward. The current complex arrangements do not necessarily provide that surety. Addressing this will not only encourage whistleblowers but be a boon for integrity and accountability."

***Kieran Pender, Senior Lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre said:***

"By exposing corporate misdeeds, human rights abuses and government wrongdoing, whistleblowers make Australia a better place. The Albanese Government should fix the law and establish a whistleblower protection authority which can ensure that all whistleblowers, whichever their sector, are protected, not punished."

**View full joint submission to the Committee:**

[transparency.org.au/ethics-professional-accountability-inquiry/](https://transparency.org.au/ethics-professional-accountability-inquiry/)

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