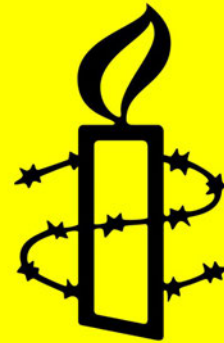


AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Public Interest Disclosure Amendment (Review) Bill 2022 [Provisions]

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of the members of the Townsville group of Amnesty International Australia regarding the proposed changes to whistleblower protection legislation. Amnesty International believes that everyone is entitled to live in a world where their human rights are recognised, realised, and protected. Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

People have a right to know if the government they elected and the departments and services they pay for are behaving legally and ethically. Whistleblowers, people who expose misconduct and wrongdoing, are essential to public interest journalism and a strong democracy.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (2013) has failed to protect complainants such as Ex-ADF lawyer David McBride and ATO Officer Richard Boyle, who were both prosecuted for breaching security protocols despite following Public Disclosure Act’s reporting guidelines. We are concerned by the lack of concrete safeguards for whistle-blowers in the proposed National Anti-Corruption Commission Bill and suggest that:

1. Our current whistleblower protection laws need real reform. Existing whistleblower laws are letting people down and are below international standards.
2. An independent whistleblower protection authority needs to be established to provide a safe way for people to report alleged wrongdoing and corruption.
3. Current whistleblower prosecutions, against people like David McBride and Richard Boyle must be dropped. It is vital that whistleblowers who bring to light abuses of power are protected as part of a healthy functioning democracy.

Jenny Brown

For Townsville Amnesty International Group

