



Public Service Commissioner to appear at hearing on whistleblower protections *Canberra - 25 September*

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will this Thursday hear from the Australian Public Service Commissioner about the need to further protect public servants who speak out about wrongdoing in the workplace as part of its inquiry into public interest disclosures.

According to the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), eligibility for whistleblower protection should be expanded and protections against victimisation and discrimination in the workplace could be strengthened. About two-thirds of the 232,000 employees in the Australian Government sector are covered by the current limited whistleblower protections under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The APSC submission to the inquiry also argues that sanctions and penalties should apply to people who make frivolous and false reports and that protections should not extend to those who blow the whistle to a third party such as the media. The Commission indicated that it is well placed to take on an expanded role as part of an improved whistleblowing framework.

The Committee Chair, Mark Dreyfus QC, MP said, "The Australian Public Service Commission plays an important role in shaping reform and advancing the ethics and integrity agenda of the Commonwealth public sector. The Committee is interested to hear more about the Commission's views on improving protections for whistleblowers."

"It is not an easy decision to conceal or reveal suspected wrongdoing in the workplace. All too often whistleblowers are left frustrated, humiliated or ostracised at great personal cost. Yet speaking out should be recognised as a positive contribution to trust and accountability in public administration.

"Many of the contributors to the inquiry have argued for an organisation like the Public Service Commission or Commonwealth Ombudsman to take on an expanded role in investigating public interest disclosures and supporting those who speak out. The Committee is keen to further explore this idea with the Commission at the hearing," Mr Dreyfus said.

Details of the hearing:

Date: Thursday 25 September 2008
Time: 9:30 – 10:20am
Location: Committee Room 1R3, 1st floor, Parliament House, Canberra
Witnesses: Ms Lynelle Briggs, Public Service Commissioner (Submission. 44)
Ms Lynne Tacy, Deputy Public Service Commissioner

Members of the public are welcome to attend the hearing or to listen to the discussions which will be broadcast on **FM 98.3** in Parliament House, and via webcast on the APH website:

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

For interview:

Contact the Committee Chair, Mr Mark Dreyfus QC, MP on (02) 6277 4305 (Canberra) or in his electorate on (03) 9769 1955.

Or Mr Dreyfus' media adviser, Tim Lisle-Williams on 0431 178 280.

For background information, including the full terms of reference, please visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/laca or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2358.