



Committee recommends public interest disclosure legislation

The Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee released its Advisory Report today on the following bills:

- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Bill 2012 and the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012
- Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2013

The Committee undertook two separate inquiries into these bills but chose to consolidate the results of each inquiry into one report.

The Committee recommended passing the Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2013, with due consideration given to some of the issues raised in the Committee's Advisory Report.

"The Committee is pleased that the Parliament is considering providing a means for identifying and reporting wrongdoing in the Commonwealth public sector as well as ensuring that problems are rectified", said committee chair Mr Graham Perrett MP.

"Consideration of a public interest disclosure scheme represents an important step forward in ensuring transparent and accountable Government processes and ensuring the highest levels of integrity are maintained across the public service," Mr Perrett said.

"We consider this legislation to be the initial step and the real work will be in developing internal disclosure processes and raising awareness within the Commonwealth public sector."

A public interest disclosure scheme across the Commonwealth public sector is a significant reform and a critical step in ensuring transparency and accountability across agencies. The emphasis of the scheme is on disclosures of wrongdoing being reported to and investigated within government in the first instance ensuring that reports are responded to and problems are rectified.

Legislating for public interest disclosure is a complex matter as reflected in the debates surrounding the bills. The degree of interest in this inquiry reflects the urgent need to develop a pro-disclosure culture and an accompanying protective scheme.

The Committee suggested that should the Parliament enact a public interest disclosure scheme, a review should take place after twelve months which takes into account the issues raised in the Advisory Report.

The report is available at www.aph.gov.au/spla. Printed copies will not be available. For further information please visit the Committee website www.aph.gov.au/spla

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