



NEW INQUIRY—legislation to protect whistleblowers in the Australian Government public sector

A wide ranging inquiry into protections for public interest disclosures (whistleblowing) within the Australian Government public sector was announced today by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

In Australia now, there are no uniform laws to protect whistleblowers. Some protections exist at both the federal and at the State and Territory level. At the federal level, the *Public Service Act 1999* provides protection for Australian Public Service (APS) employees making disclosures in certain circumstances. A Commonwealth Government employee who 'blows the whistle' is currently only protected in a narrow range of circumstances.

The Chair of the federal parliamentary committee, Mark Dreyfus QC, said, "This inquiry is an important initiative in that it will consider and report on a preferred model for legislation to protect public interest disclosures within the Australian Government public sector".

"Whistleblowing protections are designed to protect disclosures made in the public interest that would otherwise breach the law. They should also provide legal redress for whistleblowers subjected to victimisation, or discrimination", said Chair Mark Dreyfus QC. He further added, "More effective and comprehensive protection for whistleblowers can increase the likelihood of public interest disclosures being made".

The Attorney-General, the Hon. Robert McClelland MP, on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary, Senator the Hon. John Faulkner, has asked the Committee to inquire into and report on issues such as:

- the categories of people who could make protected disclosures
- the types of disclosures that should be protected
- the conditions that should apply to a person making a disclosure
- the scope of statutory protection that should be available
- procedures in relation to protected disclosures
- the relationship between the Committee's preferred model and existing Commonwealth laws, and
- such other matters as the Committee considers appropriate.

For interview:

Please 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.