



Hearing to discuss procedures for intelligence officers who blow the whistle on their employers

Canberra – 16 October

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will this Thursday hear from the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security about procedures for Australian intelligence employees who speak out about wrong doing in the workplace.

In his submission to the Committee's inquiry on whistleblower protections, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, Mr Ian Carnell, stated that his office should continue to be the external recipient of public interest disclosures (whistleblower reports) from intelligence and security employees. He further argued that disclosures of wrongdoing to third parties such as the media should not be covered under a revised whistleblowing scheme due to the ongoing secrecy obligations of intelligence officers.

The Committee Chair, Mark Dreyfus QC, MP said, "Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, both the power and the presence of Australia's intelligence agencies have expanded dramatically. The role of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security in supporting the integrity and accountability of intelligence agencies is more important than ever".

The Committee will also take evidence from Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) who have argued that the current approach to whistleblowing is piecemeal and that new national legislation should build on existing state legislation. ALHR also consider that all government employees, and employees of private corporations that deliver services on behalf of the government, should be covered by whistleblower legislation.

"Whistleblowers often wrestle with strong tensions concerning their professional sense of loyalty to their colleagues, their personal interests of career progression, family welfare, and higher principles of morality, conscience and truth. Any framework of whistleblower protection needs to support those who speak out, while appropriately addressing interests of the public and the interests of people against whom allegations are made. The stakes are even higher if you are working in the intelligence community" Mr Dreyfus said.

Details of the hearing:

Date: Thursday 16 October 2008
Time: 10:00am – 11:00am
Location: Committee Room 1R3, 1st floor, Parliament House, Canberra
Witnesses: Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (Submission 3)
Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (Submission 9)

Please note: The Committee will be conducting a private meeting prior to the commencement of the public hearing. The public will be admitted at the conclusion of the private meeting.

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.