



Departmental heads to discuss whistleblower protection laws Canberra – 27 November

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will this Thursday hear from the Secretaries of the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and a Deputy Secretary from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, on measures to support public servants who speak out about wrongdoing in the workplace. The hearing is part of the Committee's inquiry into whistleblowing protections within the Australian Government public sector.

There are a number of agencies within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio that may investigate whistleblower type allegations including the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Privacy Commissioner. The Attorney-General's Department has responsibilities in key areas of whistleblower protection including Commonwealth secrecy policy, evidence law and Australia's international legal obligations. In its submission to the inquiry, the Attorney-General's Department noted that Australia is a signatory to two international treaties relevant to whistleblowers, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Anti-Bribery Convention.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has recently undergone a major process of administrative reform following high profile investigations into a number of detention and deportation cases. The Department has also revised its own internal whistleblower procedures.

The Committee Chair, Mark Dreyfus QC MP said, "This hearing will provide an opportunity for the Committee to explore the administrative implications of implementing a new legislative framework on public interest disclosures".

"The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Attorney-General's Department play critical roles in supporting the cross-portfolio integrity agenda of the Australian Government. The Department of Immigration has recently undergone a program of cultural change and governance reform. The discussion of the experience and responsibilities of these departments will assist the Committee in its consideration of new public interest disclosure laws" Mr Dreyfus said.

Details of the hearing:

Date: Thursday 27 November 2008
Time: 9:30 – 11:00am
Location: Committee Room 1R3, 1st floor, Parliament House, Canberra
Witnesses: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Submission 19)
Attorney-Generals Department (Submission 14)
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Submission 61)

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.