

Thursday, 13 December 2018

## Law Council backs the establishment of Commonwealth Integrity Commission

The Law Council has today strongly welcomed the Australian Government's announcement of the establishment of a new Commonwealth Integrity Commission (CIC), aimed at detecting and preventing official corruption by commonwealth employees.

The new body will lead Australia's multi-agency anti-corruption framework and operate under two divisions – the public sector integrity and law enforcement integrity divisions.

Law Council of Australia President, Morry Bailes, said at first glance, the proposed CIC model and its functions is a truly positive step.

"This is a huge leap for Australian public accountability and transparency and for that the Government needs to be applauded," Mr Bailes said.

"The CIC would apply more stringent accountability measures to not only all government bodies, departments and staff, but also members of parliament and their staff."

Mr Bailes said that the Law Council has supported the establishment of a national integrity commission for some time.

"Official corruption is a serious issue here and around the world, undermining democratic processes, jeopardising economic development and threatening stability," Mr Bailes said.

"We will be examining the consultation paper thoroughly, as it is vital we strike a balance between transparency and ensuring the rights and reputations of individuals.

"What we must not have unintended consequences which could have devastating outcomes for those affected. People can have their lives destroyed if we don't get it right.

"It is also essential the coercive powers exercised by the CIC through private chamber hearings are not abused and that there are rights enshrined to protect legal professional privilege," Mr Bailes said.

The Law Council looks forward to working with government, and parliament, to ensure the CIC is an effective, ethical and transparent official watchdog.

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