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## Whistleblower protections a major development that paves the way for further expansion

New measures within the registered organisations legislation, passed early this morning, will drastically improve whistleblower protections for those within the private and non-government sectors.

The whistleblower protections were inserted into the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2014 by Senators Xenophon and Hinch and passed the Senate with the support of other crossbenchers including Senators Hanson and Leyonhjelm.

As part of the package, the Government has committed to a wider Parliamentary inquiry into whistleblower protections and the establishment of an expert advisory panel.

Law Council of Australia President, Stuart Clark AM, said the legal sector has long advocated for stronger whistleblower laws and extending protections that exist in the public sector is a very positive development.

"Protection for whistleblowers exists in the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, but the Act only applies to former and current public officials," Mr Clark said.

"These crossbench amendments now mean that vital whistleblower protection is moving well-beyond the public sphere and finding its way into the non-government and private sector. This is why this new legislation is so important.

"Those who are considering blowing the whistle on inappropriate or improper conduct within registered organisations will now be able to do so behind a wall of significant protection.

"Reprisals against them will carry a substantial civil or criminal penalty, and they will be able to apply for damages if relevant.

"These new laws should promote transparency and ethical behaviour within registered organisations.

"It is a healthy thing for legitimate whistleblowers to be emboldened to speak out at all levels if something is amiss within their organisations.

"People should not be cowed by the threat of reprisal.

"The Law Council would certainly endorse this principle being expanded beyond registered organisations and we welcome the commitment coming from the Parliament and Government in this area," Mr Clark said.

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**Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs**

P 02 6246 3715

E [Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au](mailto:Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au)

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**Anil Lambert: Media**

P 0416 426 722

E [anil@hortonadvisory.com.au](mailto:anil@hortonadvisory.com.au)