

# Open Letter on the Establishment of a National Integrity Commission

## To the Prime Minister

**Enough is enough. The establishment of a National Integrity Commission with teeth is long overdue.**

Last election, all sides of politics promised to legislate an integrity commission.  
In fact, the Government promised:

*“It’ll be done a lot quicker than the promise those opposite made as to when they would do it; it’ll be a lot quicker than the 12 months that they promised.”*

– THEN-ATTORNEY GENERAL CHRISTIAN PORTER, HANSARD I AUGUST 2019.

This was one of several ‘priority reforms’ that the Government would be ‘working to achieve early in the 46th Parliament.’

In the current climate, we understand that priorities can change. However, the Government has kept the Australian public waiting for 922 days, and has found time to tackle a great number of the Government’s self-described priorities outside of the coronavirus response – but has yet to find time for this one.

**A National Integrity Commission is urgently needed to fill the gaps in our integrity system and restore trust in our democracy.**

A major cause of the current deterioration in trust is the suspicion that corruption permeates many governmental decisions and actions. Corruption, broadly understood in this context, occurs when those in public office place private interests over the public good. The avoidance of corruption is an essential organising principle of our representative democracy.

Existing federal integrity agencies lack the necessary jurisdiction, powers and expertise to investigate properly the impartiality and bona-fides of decisions made by, and conduct of, the federal government and public sector.

**Australia Institute research shows that while public confidence in its state government leaders is soaring, the same cannot be said for our federal government.**

The National Integrity Committee has outlined a benchmark for designing a model integrity commission with internal and external protections to ensure its own integrity. It must have a broad jurisdiction and strong investigative powers including, subject to proper protections, the power to hold public hearings when it is in the public interest to do so, in order to adequately investigate and expose corruption and misconduct.

**We urge you to establish a strong, effective and independent National Integrity Commission immediately.**

### SIGNATORIES --

**The Hon Mary Gaudron QC**

Former Judge, High Court of Australia

**The Hon Anthony Whealy QC**

Former Judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Paul Stein AM QC**

Former Judge, NSW Court of Appeal

**The Hon Margaret White AO**

Former Judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

**The Hon Stephen Charles AO QC**

Former Judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

**The Hon David Harper AO QC**

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**The Hon Carmel McLure AC QC**

Former President, Western Australian Court of Appeal

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