

Monday, 26 November 2018

## Crossbench bill and passed motion brings corruption watchdog closer, Government must join the table

The Private Members' Bill introduced today to establish a National Integrity Commission – and the Greens motion just passed – have been applauded as extremely positive steps by the Law Council, who has urged the Government to get onboard with the process.

The Law Council strongly supports the establishment of a National Integrity Commission to combat corruption at the federal level.

Law Council of Australia President, Morry Bailes, said it was important that momentum is maintained, but that proper process is followed to ensure Parliament gets the model right.

"We applaud the work of Cathy McGowan and other crossbench MPs in introducing legislation and driving a successful vote in Parliament today," Mr Bailes said.

"It is looking ever more likely that the establishment of this crucial federal watchdog is a matter of 'when' not 'if'. It is absolutely time that the Government joins the table.

"We hope comments by the Attorney-General mean the Government is preparing to engage.

"The introduced Bill is an important addition to the debate. It will require careful scrutiny to ensure it strikes the appropriate balance between addressing corruption and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms.

"These include important rights around protecting legal professional privilege and the exercise of coercive powers," Mr Bailes said.

Mr Bailes said that corruption is a serious global phenomenon that undermines democratic institutions, jeopardises economic development, and threatens the stability and security of governments.

"There is a need for addressing federal corruption in Australia. While Australia is generally regarded in a positive light when it comes to corruption, there is still room for improvement," Mr Bailes said.

"We look forward to continuing to work with the crossbench and the Australian Parliament to get the model right and help make a National Integrity Commission a reality.

"We again acknowledge Labor's established position to create national anti-corruption body," Mr Bailes said.

Today's developments follow the publication of an open letter by 34 former judges urging Prime Minister Scott Morrison to support the creation of a National Integrity Commission.

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