



OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONER AGAINST CORRUPTION (NT)

International Anti-Corruption Day 9 December 2023

8 December 2023

Saturday 9 December 2023 is International Anti-Corruption Day. This year we recognise the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to which Australia is a signatory.

As Australians we have the benefit of living in a democracy underpinned by the rule of law, open democratic election processes and the separation of powers. But we must be cautious not to take those basic hallmarks for granted. Corruption can threaten the roots of democracy, can undermine trust in government and jeopardise social and economic development.

For those reasons, being alive to the risks that create opportunities for corruption is critically important.

The UN Convention calls for efforts to prevent corruption. Preventative policies, the establishment of independent anti-corruption bodies and transparency in respect of election campaigns and party finance are all anti-corruption measures referred to in the Convention. So too are systems that promote transparency and prevent conflicts of interest.

Public institutions must have in place checks and balances that guard against corruption. Steps such as protections for whistleblowers, robust recruitment and procurement processes, and the proper and accountable expenditure of public money, are of fundamental importance. Decisions must be, and must be seen to be, made without improper influence or motives. To support good decision making, senior decision makers, including Ministers, must have the benefit of frank and fearless advice provided by impartial public servants and, in turn, those public servants must be able to give such advice without fear of personal repercussion. A free, independent and responsible media also plays a role in guarding against corruption, by questioning, and accurately reporting upon, issues of public interest that expose serious impropriety within government.

As we acknowledge the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, we should reflect upon the experiences of those who live in countries where corruption has had a marked impact upon their way of life, and we must be vigilant to prevent the very significant harm that arises as a result of corruption in government.

Michael Riches

Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (NT)

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