

100 Days of the National Anti-Corruption Commission

Commissioner Paul Brereton

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Today marks 100 days since the commencement of the National Anti-Corruption Commission.

Since 1 July, our workforce, infrastructure and capacity have continually grown, with close to 50 new staff recruited, and the establishment of purpose-built offices, facilities and hearing rooms progressing.

To date, our operational efforts have been focussed on receiving and assessing reports of corruption. This began on day one, and 100 days later, the Commission has received more than 1200 reports.

Increasingly, as these reports are triaged and assessed, our main effort is shifting to the conduct of investigations. Our focus has to be on issues of serious or systemic corruption, where we can best add value in the public interest. So far, we have opened three new corruption investigations, as well as progressing 6 that were commenced by the former Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity. In addition, we have commenced 9 preliminary investigations.

The overwhelming majority of the reports we have received have been from members of the public, using our online webform. Nearly 90% of these relate to matters that have not been publicised in the media. This confirms that Australians are insisting on integrity across the public sector.

The Commission is also conducting education and engagement activities to highlight corruption risks and share prevention strategies. To date, the

Deputy Commissioners and I, and our senior executive staff, have between us made 27 presentations to parliamentarians, senior public servants, agency heads and staff, boardrooms, committees and associations around the country. This vital work to *prevent* corruption is no less important than detecting and exposing it.

Last month, I had the privilege of representing Australia in a series of meetings with international anti-corruption authorities and agencies from other nations. This provided an opportunity to benchmark our practices and learn from the experience of others. Already, the Commission is a presence on the world stage, credentialled by the United Nations as Australia's authority for corruption prevention and recognised as embracing best-practice principles – not least in relation to whistleblower protection – to which other nations aspire.

In our first 100 days, we have made a strong start to enhancing integrity in the Australian public sector. But we cannot do it alone. Our institutions must embrace, from the top down and at every level, a culture in which the giving of honest if unwelcome advice and reports is not dissuaded, but encouraged; in which decisions are made impartially, on the evidence and the merits, in the public interest and without regard to personal interest; and in which responsibility and accountability is accepted, including for the inevitable mistakes. In this, and in insisting on integrity, every one of you has a role to play.
