

## Introductory remarks by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Colin Neave

More than a year since the Commonwealth Public Interest Disclosure scheme commenced, it is timely to reflect upon how such a scheme can contribute to integrity and accountability in the Commonwealth public sector. Encouraging a robust culture that supports the reporting of suspected wrong doing by public officials can provide ancillary benefits to agencies. By speaking up about suspected wrong doing, public officials provide agencies with an early warning sign about problems and issues within an organisation, providing an opportunity for them to be addressed before they grow into an intractably complex problem. A recent international academic study of G20 countries noted that:

*“Whistleblowing is now considered to be among the most effective, if not the most effective means to expose and remedy corruption, fraud and other types of wrongdoing in the public and private sectors”*. <sup>1]</sup>

It is important that agencies ensure there is sufficient awareness of and accessibility to the PID scheme, and that public officials are encouraged to utilise the scheme to disclose suspected wrongdoing. Additionally, agencies should allocate sufficient resources to respond to, and take action in relation to disclosures made. Perceptions that action will not be taken can seriously undermine the confidence of staff in the agency’s PID scheme.

Officials who are unhappy with the way their agency handled their disclosure are likely to become disillusioned with management, and may decide to speak out publicly. In limited circumstances, this is permitted by the PID Act. Common causes for dissatisfaction are the timeliness or the adequacy of an investigation, a failure to keep the discloser informed about the progress, or a failure to implement recommendations.

I am pleased to send you our first newsletter with information we hope you will find useful.

For more information, see my [biography](#).

[1] Whistle-blower Protection Laws in G20 Countries: Priorities for Action. Wolfe. S., Worth. M., Dreyfus. S., A.J. Brown (September

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## Access to the PID scheme - time for a health check?

Those who work, or have worked, in an organisation are often the first to know when there is a problem. They are also best placed to raise the alarm before the damage is done. However speaking up can be extremely stressful and can leave public officials vulnerable to retaliatory treatment. It is important that the PID scheme is accessible to these people. How accessible is the PID scheme in your agency?

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## Assessing reprisal risk- some tips and traps

Identifying and addressing reprisal risk through a risk assessment process is an integral part of an agency's responsibility to protect its staff in relation to PIDs. Here are some tips and traps to consider if you play a role in the risk assessment process.

[➤ Read more](#)

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## Talking PID - recent events in Canberra

The Commonwealth Ombudsman's office recently hosted a number of successful PID events providing a forum for agencies and other oversight bodies to share information about all things PID.

In Canberra on 30 April 2015, a PID community of practice of seminar was held for Commonwealth officers with a role in relation to the PID scheme.

[> Read more](#)

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## New PID website and resources

The Commonwealth Ombudsman's PID webpages have undergone a revamp and now include more information for agencies and disclosers. Check it out at [www.pid.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.pid.ombudsman.gov.au). There are also some new PID resources available.

[> Read more](#)

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## Upcoming PID annual reporting

With the end of the financial year approaching, the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office will be approaching agencies soon to collect data for the annual report on the operation of the PID Act.

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## Got a tricky issue?

If you are a public official involved with administering the PID Act, or a current or former public official who would like to report suspected wrongdoing, the Commonwealth Ombudsman can offer guidance and assist with resolving any 'tricky issues' that may arise.

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