



Crossbench Backs CPI on Integrity in Law-making

Crossbench MPs and Senators have welcomed the launch of the Centre for Public Integrity's report "Law-making with Integrity".

The report spells out four key recommendations:

- Major reforms in areas of integrity risk should be developed through an independent review process, to ensure policy development is evidence-based and free from government self-interest
- Exposure drafts of legislation, with explanatory notes, should be released with enough time for the public to give proper input and consideration before bills are introduced
- Significant legislation should be subject to full review by parliamentary committees, and not be debated until this scrutiny is complete except in genuinely urgent circumstances
- All legislation in high-risk policy areas should require an independent post-implementation review, to correct failures and unintended consequences

Listening to experts, widely consulting the community, and taking the time to ensure legislation is working as intended should all be cornerstones of our legislative process, but unfortunately in our experience this is often not the case.

The government's friendless Freedom of Information (FOI) Act bill is a prime example of the disregard for proper legislative process on a critical matter of government integrity. Australians' legal right to review government documents is an important way for journalists and the public to shed light on the government's work, but the government sought to curtail the FOI scheme by introducing its bill without warning, with changes based on cherry-picked snippets from past reviews and against the advice of experts, with no meaningful public consultation.

The government's justification for major changes was not supported by evidence.

The deeply flawed FOI bill did not make it into law, but it demonstrates what can happen government rides roughshod over proper process.

If the Albanese government is serious about restoring public trust in government, law-making with integrity is a critical place to improve.



Allegra Spender, Independent MP for Wentworth

“Too often our parliament is run by smart politics rather than good policy.

“Good legislation requires expert advice, public consultation and timely review to ensure it’s working as intended.

“The Centre for Public Integrity has set out the standard. Without integrity in the process, you don’t get integrity or good policy.”

Helen Haines, Independent MP for Indi

“Australians value honesty, a fair go and accountability. We should be leading the world in best-practice law-making, with integrity front and centre.

“This is not just about integrity - it is about good process and genuine consultation to ensure laws are made properly.”

Senator David Pocock

“Trust in government depends on making laws with integrity and proper scrutiny. We’re fortunate to have strong democratic institutions, but the Albanese Government has a track record of rushing complex laws through Parliament without adequate process. Most recently, it rushed through hate speech laws in a single day. This has eroded public trust and needs to end. This report is a timely call to lift the standard of law-making in Australia.”

Monique Ryan Independent MP for Kooyong

“Robust legislative scrutiny is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. It ensures that diverse interests are considered and that unintended consequences are minimised.

“It’s troubling that, in Australia, laws are often rushed from opaque Cabinet deliberations to Royal Assent. Parliamentary debate is often gagged and guillotined, and exposure drafts are routinely not released. “Committee reports on the impacts of legislation are often delivered after legislation is rushed through the House, and the Albanese government has been very slow to respond to and act on the recommendations of parliamentary inquiries.

“While these procedural features may appeal to the Government’s “announceables” list, expedited legislation ultimately comes at the cost of greater transparency and better outcomes for Australians.”

Nicolette Boele Independent MP for Bradfield

“It’s never been more important that the institutions comprising our democracy – the Australian Parliament included – operate robustly and with the dual intent of bettering conditions for Australians and earning and maintaining their trust.



"The CPI's law-making report is a timely reminder of the importance of sound law-making and the qualities that make it so.

"Sunlight and scrutiny cannot be optional extras in our legislative process. When the super-majority Albanese government makes laws in the dark, it's the quality of our laws that suffer.

Dr Sophie Scamps Independent MP for Mackellar

"Too often we see major reforms rushed through Parliament with vested interests looming in the background. Independent reviews must be an integral part of the process to ensure new laws are actually effective and there's no unforeseen consequences."

Senator Tammy Tyrell

"Australians deserve integrity and transparency in their lawmaking processes. This report calls for the bare minimum – evidence-based policy with proper public consultation and review."

Media contact: Peter McEvoy 0419 274 417

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