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12 October 2004

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIA'S CORRUPTION STUDY RELEASE

The Australian chapter of Transparency International (TIA), the non-partisan global coalition against corruption, today released the Commonwealth component of the Australian National Integrity Study.

Release of the Report was delayed until after the Federal elections because it discusses contentious issues such as the children overboard incident, Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the treatment of the Australian Federal Police Commissioner earlier this year. These incidents are raised in the Report as illustrative of the active public debate on the issue of the ethical climate of Commonwealth administration.

Although the study confirmed Australia's status as a relatively low corruption nation, it highlighted specific areas of concern including the relatively weak Commonwealth protection for whistleblowers.

"This is of particular concern," said TI Australia CEO Grahame Leonard, "because the corruption that exists in Australia in areas such as the construction industry and cartels require whistleblowers to expose the corruption and deal with it through the law enforcement system."

The Australian survey was formally launched at the TI movement's Annual Members Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, by Australia's High Commissioner to Kenya, Mr. George Atkin. It is one of 16 National surveys for the Pacific region including just completed surveys for twelve Pacific Island Nations funded by AusAID. The studies reinforce the Australian Government's strong commitment to policies and programmes aimed at effectively combating corruption.

A National Integrity Study is a major tool designed to identify potential or active areas of systemic corruption in a country. Studies are conducted by independent specialists indigenous to the country. To date, more than sixty surveys have been published worldwide.



The Australian study identified the lack of any watchdog anti-corruption agency as a major weakness in the Commonwealth arena.

Whilst research has consistently revealed low levels of detection and prosecution of corruption, the latest study criticises the lack of transparent reporting mechanisms at the federal level, arguing that this has implications for government in that were systemic corruption problems to arise, they may not be recognised early enough.

As an example, the study pointed to public debate about senior civil servants being subject to political pressures that could impact adversely upon their capacity to fulfil their obligations to provide frank and neutral advice.

“It will be interesting to see how Australia is rated in this year’s Corruption Perception Index due to be released later this month” added Mr. Leonard. In the last global survey, Australia ranked the eighth least corrupt nation.

All the Reports including today’s Australian National Integrity Study can be accessed on the TIA website: www.transparency.org.au

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