

Still not enough action on foreign corruption by New Zealand says watchdog

International rise in prosecutions; call on New Zealand government to do more to raise awareness of bribery issues

Transparency International (New Zealand) Inc
Wellington New Zealand

6 September 2012

Rising prosecutions for acts of bribery committed overseas are not being matched in New Zealand, according to a new report issued today by the Berlin Secretariat of global anti-corruption group Transparency International.

The report placed New Zealand in the category of there being “No Enforcement” of the OECD’s Anti-Bribery Convention which requires each signatory country to make the bribery of foreign public officials a crime. New Zealand had no foreign bribery court cases or investigations underway in 2011. By contrast, Australia has improved its position to be considered a “Moderate Enforcer”, having had two cases and eight investigations underway last year.

A director of the local New Zealand chapter of Transparency International, Fiona Tregonning, considered that the Report reflected the overall picture of currently inadequate anti-bribery efforts in New Zealand. She commented:

Regrettably, we think it unlikely that no New Zealanders ever engage in bribery of public officials overseas. But as the Report points out, one of the problems is the lack of reporting of suspected foreign bribery, which means there are few if any resulting investigations by the SFO or Police.

One of the key recommendations is that New Zealand needs to improve the general public’s awareness of the risks associated with bribery. Transparency International New Zealand believes that this is important for many reasons. Transparency International New Zealand Director Fiona Tregonning said:

What this Report shows is that other countries are increasingly taking bribery seriously and enforcing legislation enabling them to prosecute their citizens - and sometimes others - for committing bribery overseas. New Zealand companies and individuals are dangerously unaware of the risks they face, both via New Zealand law and foreign laws, if they bribe overseas.

Transparency International New Zealand believes that it is time for the government to act to show its commitment to the increasing global movement against corruption. As well as raising public awareness, this should include the long-overdue ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption and strengthening New Zealand's penalties for those convicted of private sector bribery. Fiona Tregonning said:

New Zealand has for too long proceeded simply on the assumption that we are – and will always remain – a generally 'clean' and un-corrupt country. Strengthening our anti-bribery laws to align ourselves with international standards, and acting to enforce them, would go a long way to making the perception a reality, as well as sending a strong signal to New Zealand companies who operate in countries with endemic corruption.

Notes to editors:

1. Transparency International is the global civil society coalition leading the fight against corruption - <http://www.transparency.org/>. Transparency International (New Zealand) Inc is the local chapter of the global organisation - <http://www.transparency.org.nz/>.
2. The Transparency International Report "Exporting Corruption? Country Enforcement of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, Progress Report 2012" is available here [OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, Progress Report 201](#)
3. The Report is produced annually by the Transparency International Secretariat in Berlin, based on independent assessments of the number of corruption cases and investigations, weighted according to the share of world trade, by Transparency International's national chapters in 37 of the 39 OECD countries.
4. The contributors to the New Zealand section of the Report were Fiona Tregonning (Transparency International New Zealand director and senior associate at Bell Gully), and Aaron Lloyd (partner, Minter Ellison Rudd Watts).
5. The [Transparency International Secretariat's press release](#).
6. The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention is available at <http://www.oecd.org/daf/briberyininternationalbusiness/anti-briberyconvention/oecdconventiononcombatingbriberyofforeignpublicofficialsininternationalbusinesstransactions.htm>
7. Media contact:
Fiona Tregonning, Transparency International New Zealand director
fiona.tregonning@post.harvard.edu
021 960 826